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BLACKMEN #20

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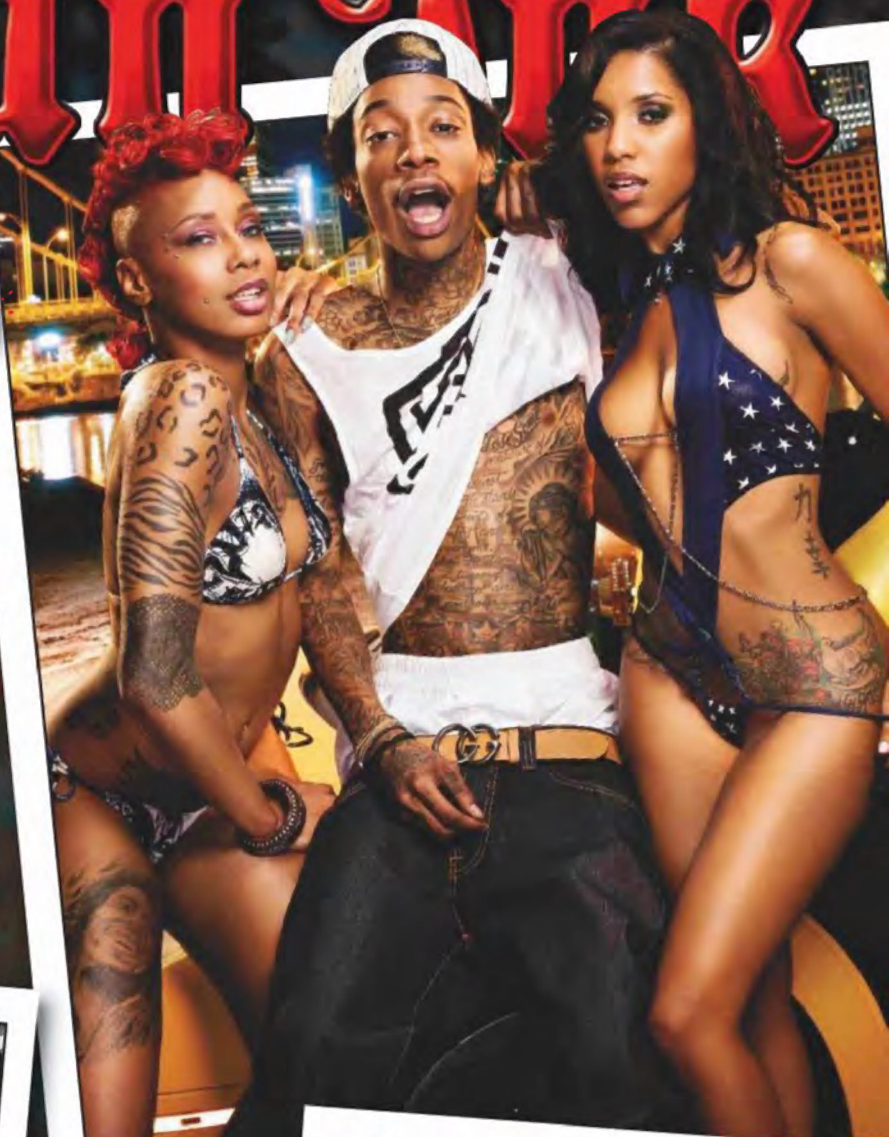
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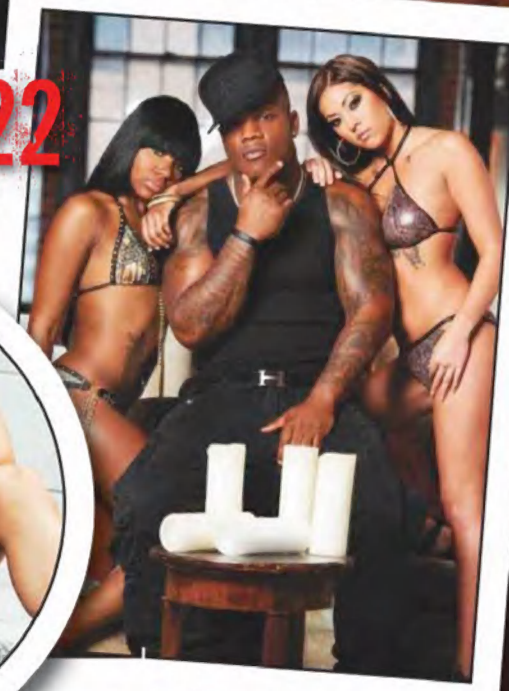
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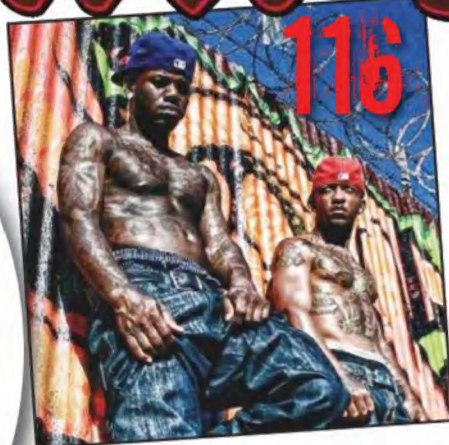
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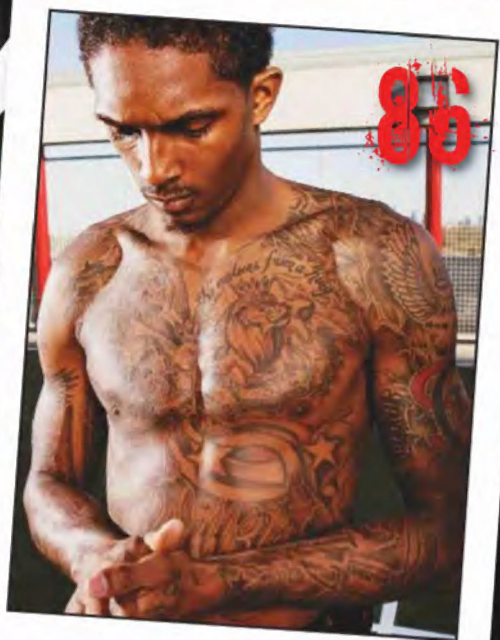
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Urban Ink

A TATTOO MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR



Aaah maaan, do we have a spicy issue for you! For *Urban Ink's* 20th issue, we linked up with Wiz Khalifa for a tat-filled, hazy, high-end photo spread complete with some badass inked vixens, and even a "Black and Yellow" Lamborghini. We hooked up with The "King of Ink" on the East Coast leg of his tour to chat about his growing tattoo collection, his rise to the top of the charts, as well as the film project with Snoop D-O-double G—all while embracing the high life.

If Wiz's feature leaves you with a sudden case of the munchies, dig into our piece on Mobb Deep's, Prodigy. After a three-and-a-half year stint in the state pen, P is back—and stronger than ever. He recently released *My Infamous Life: The Autobiography of Mobb Deep's Prodigy*, and has been in the studio day and night producing some blazing comeback joints. P took some time from his extended studio sessions and book signing tour to pose for the *UI* lens, in order to discuss his autobiography—which is creating rifts through the hip-hop blogosphere. Also, he let us in on his cutting edge projects and self-defining ink.

Super-producer and Columbia recording artist, Sean Garrett, agreed to slip us into his busy schedule for a photoshoot and sit down interview. We met up with "The Pen" at a studio out in Long Island City, NY, where he and a couple of lady friends were getting real grown and sexy for the camera.

We also ran into hip-hop group, Travis Porter—who were chillin' out in a tattoo shop where they showed off their tattoo collection and chopped it up about their new deal with Jive Records.

And if that wasn't enough for your ink slinging senses, we saved season six "Bad Girls Club" vixen, Wilmaire Sena—for the 12th round knockout. So, kick up your Air Force 1's, J's, Chucks, or Vans—and lose yourself in the ink.

Plus, a whole lot more, like NBA baller Louis Williams, and always some of the hottest ink slingers to ever put it down and mark it up.

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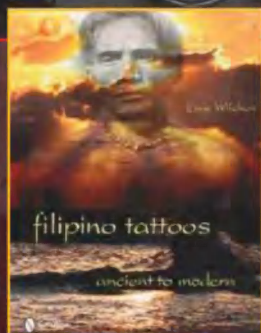
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Filipino Tattoos Symbol of Cultural Pride

Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern (Schiffer Publishing Ltd.)—with forewords by master tattoo expert, Su'a Suluape Alaiva'a Petelo and traditional tattooist, Keone Nunes—explores the deep meanings and importance of tattoos in the Filipino culture. Author, Lane Wilcken, introduces the public to the process and tools used, as well as the ancestral and spiritual aspects of tattoo markings in the Filipino culture.



This is the first serious study of Filipino tattoos, and it considers early accounts from explorers and Spanish-speaking writers. The text presents Filipino cultural practices connected with ancestral and spiritual aspects of tattoo markings, and how they relate to the process and tools used to make the marks.

Through the fascinating text, and over 200 images, including color photographs and design drawings—the deep meanings and importance of these markings becomes apparent.

Filipino Tattoos sells for \$39.99, and can be purchased through the publisher at www.schifferbooks.com or your local bookseller, as well as numerous online venues.

EarPollution Headphones from iFrogz A Giant Leap for Music

Looking for a great way to add style to your music, without breaking the bank? The EarPollution headphone line from iFrogz (www.iFrogz.com) offers a wide variety of on-ear headphones and earbuds—including four options that can be completely customized! Prices for these stylish pieces range from as low as \$14.99 up to \$49.99.

Customizable styles include Fallout and NervePipes on-ear styles as well as Flow and Ozone earbuds. One can select the colors of the headband, the sidepiece, ear cushion and the speaker, so tunes are unique to the listener—even on the outside! iFrogz also offers stylish, protective cases for the iPhone, iPad, and iPods.

You can check out the entire EarPollution line at: ifrogz.com/category/275



S.O. Tech/Stussy Backpack Urban Recon Go Packs

Popular Urban wear line, Stussy's, "Buffalo Soldiers" capsule collection is inspired by the military design ideals of utility, durability and form. Rob Abeyta, Jr.—Art Director for Stussy—approached Jim Cragg—President of Special Operations Technologies—to adapt S.O. Tech's Mission Pack Series to form a center point of the Buffalo Soldiers line. What came from the unlikely union was the S.O. Tech / Stussy Urban Recon backpack. The detail of military design and foundational color palette tell the wearer they have pride and confidence in their gear, the same way a soldier has confidence in his S.O. Tech pack when deploying into combat.

S.O. Tech has been designing and sewing tactical gear for American Special Operations units since 1997. The internal magazine chest rig and SOCOM Mission Go Bag are just two of S.O. Tech's many patented innovations. Cragg—the driving force behind S.O. Tech—is also still serving as a Major in the US Army Reserve. Cragg spent most of his career in Special Operations units and used his tactical experience there to design mission-centric nylon load carriage systems.

As part of its charity program—Veterans Industry Program for Employment Reintegration (V.I.P.E.R.)—the S.O. Tech / Stussy Urban Recon packs—were assembled by veterans from the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital. V.I.P.E.R. provides vocational rehabilitation and jobs to recovering veterans ranging from Iraq and Afghanistan through the Viet Nam era.

These state of the art backpacks are available on the S.O. Tech page (specopstech.com) for 125 dollars, or you can visit the Stussy website (stussy.com) where they're available for 120 dollars.

Otis B. Arterberry, III Grants A Dying Wish

Otis B. Arterberry, III a.k.a. Blaqlion—a previously featured artist in Urban Ink—encountered a very touching moment in his tattooing career, which he generously shared with us.

"Two days before Christmas 2010, Jamie and Jodie Habuda came in to get worked on. They both wanted a cancer ribbon with a cross, because their mother—Madeline Carol Habuda—was dying of cancer. They wanted to get the tattoo for their mother, because it was one of the things on her "Bucket List," but she became too sick to get it.

While I was working on Jamie, she began to cry, and say how much this tattoo meant to them, and their mother. They were getting the tattoos because she couldn't, and they were going to the hospital right after to surprise her with them.

The more Jamie spoke about the importance of the tattoo, the more I wished I was able to do something to help ease the pain. She said, 'I wish there was a way for my mom to get this, too, so we can all share this moment,' and she burst into tears.

Then, it just came to me. I asked, 'Do you think it would be okay if maybe I came to the hospital with you after we are done, and maybe I can draw the tattoo on her? This way she can have it also.' Jamie just stared at me and said, 'You would do that?' I said, 'Sure, why not?' She made a few calls to make sure it was okay, as I grabbed a couple of pens and we were on our way.

When we got to the hospice floor of the hospital, we entered the room, [and] there were about 12 to 15 people in there. Jamie told her mom about what the girls had wanted to surprise her with, and Madeline looked at me and said, 'You came all the way up here to 'tattoo' me?' I said, 'Yes, ma'am,' and she just laughed. Madeline's sister had some markers and they made a space for me to work.

It was really quiet in the room; there were a few whispers and a little sobbing and tears. Madeline cracked a few jokes at me and made me smile, which eased the tension that I think she knew I had.

When I was finished, she hugged me. They took a few pictures and thanked me for coming. Her daughters and sister also thanked me, and told me how much it meant to them that I came. I told them, 'No, thank you for allowing me to be a part of this.' And before I broke down in tears, I got the hell outta there.

Madeline Carol Habuda passed away eight days later. The morning that she passed away, Jamie emailed me. She let me know of her mother's passing, and thanked me again for giving her mother—and their family—something special. In my 12-year career, that was the most meaningful tattoo experience that I have ever had; and that is exactly why I do what I do. I use my god-given talents to help ease someone's pain. With the Habudas, I had the opportunity to share my gifts with others (or a version of it) to give something that wasn't thought to be possible. I just want to share what I know, and in the process maybe inspire someone else to do the same."

— Otis B. Arterberry, III a.k.a. BLAQLION

Otis B. Arterberry, III and Madeline Carol Habuda





Tyler Fyre

Massachusetts Tattoo & Arts Festival New England Ink Party

It went down on the weekend of March 18, 2011 at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Convention Center in Sturbridge, MA. Slingers, collectors and vendors rejoiced under one roof for the Fifth Annual Massachusetts Tattoo & Art Festival.

The Amazing Blazing, Tyler Fyre—who also entertained the crowd with his death-defying, gut-wrenching fire swallowing act—hosted the weekend's event, as spectators were awed by the wild flaming stunts Tyler performed.

Even though Tyler's show was eye-catching, it did little

to distract the guests from the exceptional ink being slung and shown off on the convention hall floor. Artists from shops all around attended the exciting event, including: Fantasy Ink Tattoo Studio, Horseshoe & Hand Grenades Tattoo, Khan, Sacred Sparrow, Zaza Ink, and many others.

Lyle Tuttle hosted a seminar on tattoo machine maintenance and tuning, as well as a second seminar on how to design and build your very own tat machine. Also, awards were presented throughout the weekend on categories such as: "Best Traditional," "Best 'Large,' 'Medium,' or 'Small' Black & Grey," "Best Portrait," and of course, "Tattoo of the Day." [Photography by George Weinstein]



Fashion Gordon, Johnny Lovell and Monique Arnold



Mr. Bruce from Flaming Tattoo Shop working on Mr. Herschel Brown



Leah Chloda

PITBULLSHIRT.COM – Biker Fashion With A Cause

It's not shocking that pitbulls catch a bad rap in the media—not to mention in society. Pitbull attacks make it through the news regularly, depicting the doe-eyed breed as a violent, savage, and virtually erratic animal—garnering them leaders in illegal, and horrendous dogfight rinks, which only fuels their unfortunate impression. Luckily, more and more organizations across the nation have manned up to not only bring out the lighter side of these pups, but also rescue the world's most notorious "underdog."

Among these organizations is

PITBULLSHIRT.COM—a branch of artist, Tommy Athanasiou's, web page—**TOMMYPOPART.COM**—where his self-designed, "Unique biker-style pitbull-themed t-shirts," help raise

awareness of the plight of the naturally sweet-natured breed.

Within the link, the message to spread the awareness of adoption speaks loudly, including the website to donate ten percent of proceeds to a different pitbull rescue group or educational organization.

Athanasiou's site not only bestows money to various rescue groups, but each month, the pitbull organization that is selected as their donation recipient, gains notable recognition on **PITBULLSHIRT.COM**.

www.pitbullshirt.com



If you've got something you want us to feature on the pages of In A Flash, send it to: Urban Ink, 210 Route 4 East, Suite 211, Paramus, NJ 07652, Attention: Flash

Miguel Gomez

Behind The Bricks

Here at *Urban Ink*, we receive tons of submissions. Some are from tattoo artists trying to get their work out to the world, while others are models wanting to show-off their god-given, ink dripped, beautiful bods. At times, there are even the wacky proposals that make us bang our heads on the table as we dissect each sentence.

Out of all the entreaties, however, there's one particular submission that we've never been able to feature just because we didn't know how to present it to you—until now...

Ladies and gents, *Urban Ink* presents *Behind The Bricks*. In this new section, we will showcase the wonderful art submitted from our homies who are unfortunately on lockdown, but whose passion for art cannot be contained. We hope you enjoy what you see, and trust that we will be back with more.



Benny G. Leal



Adrian B. Arias



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URBAN INK II

Got something to say?

LETTERS

You always have some beautiful ladies in your mags; who are made up so lovely. The one feature that stands out from issue 19 is the one on the RedRoseMafia. Besides awesome ink, the ladies had some killer makeup. Who did the hair and make up job for that photo shoot? I'm looking to get into the business, and would really love to pick the brain of the person who made the ladies look so pretty.

Tara B.

San Antonio, TX

Tara,

Thank you for picking up the issue! We appreciate the hard work that is put into every shoot, and thank everyone who participates in the shoots.

The talented person who worked on hair and makeup for the RRM shoot is Vintage Hair Dresser,

Ruby Woo. You can find her on Facebook

(Facebook.com/ruby.woo13), and her email is: rubywoo@live.com.



Let me just say that I was in awe when reading Tami Roman's interview [UI #19]. She sounded nothing like the person we all saw on television. I have something against reality tv, as the shows always seem to portray people in a negative light. Even the nicest person can have a bad day, and it seems like the cameramen happen to be ready to go for those exact moments. I felt connected in a way with Tami. She's been through a lot, so I always kind of understood her actions, but at the same time, I prayed that she really wasn't as crazy as she was on camera. Thanks for clearing that up, *Urban Ink!*

Tasha J.

Camden, NJ

Tasha,

Reality tv shows do put a spin on things, but we can't get enough of them.

We also noticed the difference between Tami on television and Tami in real person from the day we met for the

photo shoot. She was truly a nice and delightful person

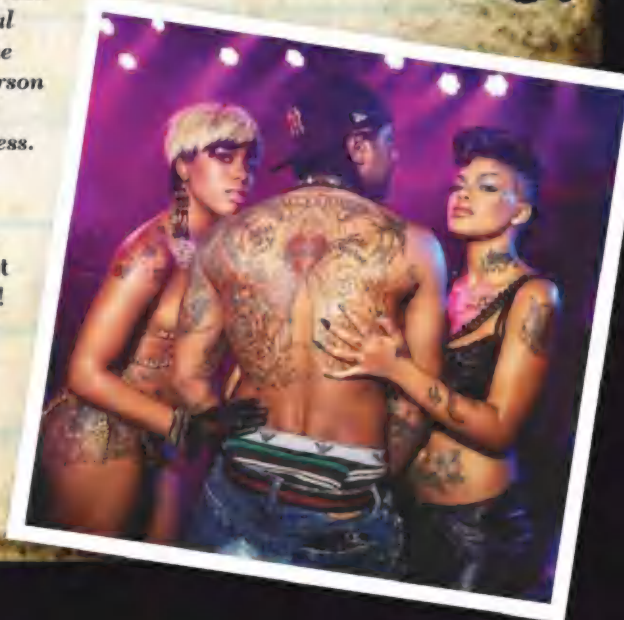
to work with. We'd be lying if we didn't say we expected her to pop at any minute, but she didn't. It was all smiles and laughs all throughout the process.

That piece on Jim Jones's back is f'ckin' sick! Mario Barth is doing his thing on that tattoo, and I love all of the details and the impression it leaves with the angels guarding heaven's gates. I can only imagine how hot it's going to look when he finally adds color to it. Props on the photos, too! The sexy tatted ladies complemented Jim's ink collection. Good sh't,

Urban Ink!

Bobby D.

Philadelphia, PA



Bobby,

Mario Barth is definitely doing a great job on Jim's back piece; and up close, the piece looks even better. Most of Jim's tattoos are a conversation starter, which is why we had to bring him on for a second time in UI. We can't wait to see what the final product looks like either. Maybe we'll have him on for a third go 'round when Mario's done with him.

First off, big ups to *Urban Ink*! Thanks for bringing the world a magazine filled with beautiful art by, and for our people—the people of “flavor.” I've always loved the mag, but to be real, nowadays, I feel as though you don't focus as hard on the art and talent like you used to. I'm very impressed by the mag, but can [you] start having the artist show, and describe their actual work more? Inform us on things like: “What makes a tat pop out on darker skin?” “Can color go on dark skin?” You know, a more close-up of the art. School us, don't lose us!

**Kente A.
Pollock, LA**

Kente,

We truly appreciate your letter. When we set off to bring the Urban community a tattoo magazine they can relate to, our mission was to answer all of the questions you posed. After numerous issues our readership expanded, which slightly shifted our attention to other facets of the Urban tattoo culture. At this point, we felt that answering the same questions issue after issue was a moot point. Although, we feel that we are still educating our readers on other parts of the culture, letters such as yours do remind us that we should revisit the good ol' days more often. We're glad we haven't lost you, and guarantee we will do our best so that we don't lose you. Thank you!

In issue 18, you featured a tat artist by name of Booda Monk from the DMV area. He seems like a really cool dude. I thought about reaching out to him to go and get some work done, but you know how it is, I kept saying I would do it tomorrow or the day after. I never got to it, and now I have no idea where my copy of the magazine is. Would you guys be able to help me out? Thanks! And keep up the good work on the magazine, You're slayin' 'em all!

**Charlie C.
Washington D.C.**

Charlie,

We know how it is. Trust us, we've all had our battles with procrastination. Although we don't have an email for Booda, we can give you his address and phone number again. You can find Mr. Monk at: Booda Monk Hip Hop Tattoos, 132 W. 25th Street, Baltimore, MD 21218, (410) 889-1129 or at (443) 801-3377. Good luck with your tat, and thank you for reading!

Yo, you guys featured some nasty tattooists in that last issue [UI #19]. You had Jose Perez, Mario Johnston, Inkestry and Lady Redz. All of them had some crazy hot pieces to show-off. I see that I'm going to have to plan a cross-country tour, and visit some of these shops. I don't think there was a tattoo that I didn't like from these artists. *Urban Ink* reigns by having the nicest tattoo artists in their magazine. I love your magazine!

**Tony S.
North Bergen, NJ**

Tony,

Thanks for the props! We thrive on finding the sickest slingers in the world. It's not an easy task, as tattooing is becoming more and more popular as the years pass; and more and more slingers keep springing up from every part of the world. However, it's our job, and we love it! Every time we come across a Jose Perez, or a Mario Johnston, we feel that we've served our purpose by bringing our readers the illest urban tattoo artists out there; and when we receive compliments like yours, we're sure that we've done our job well. Thanks, Tony!

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Urban Ink Letters

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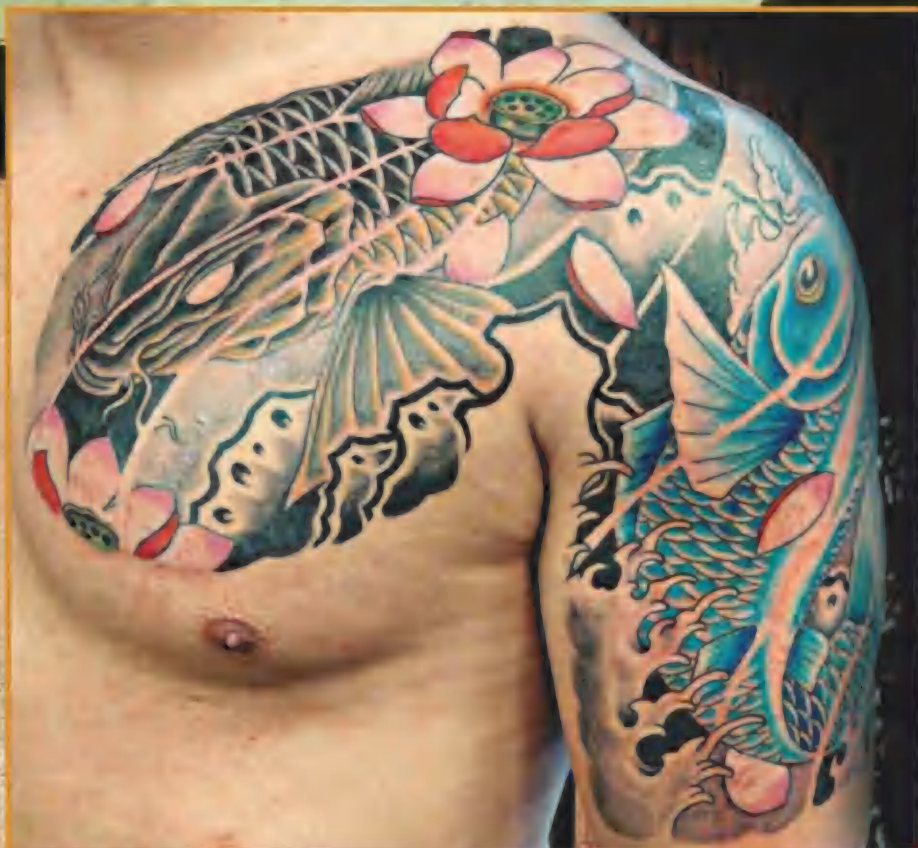


Tito Garcia Large Scale Ink

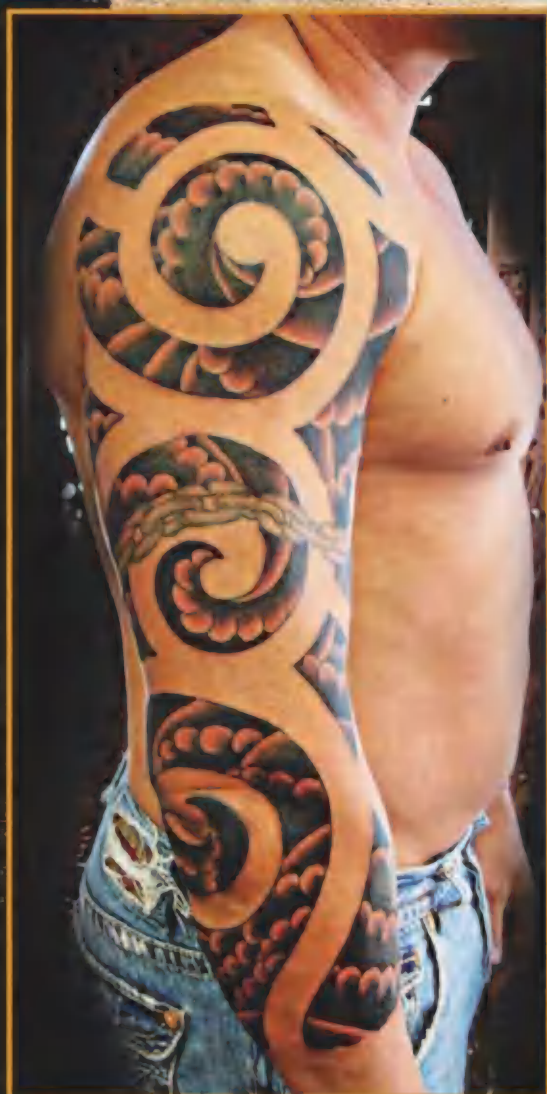
Article by Jen Gomez

In 1995, Puerto Rican born artist, Tito Garcia, first started to tattoo at 21 in his native land, before migrating to the United States to better develop his skills and study more about the tattoo art form.

Three years later, when tattooing became legal in New York City, Garcia made his move to the Big Apple, working in a plethora of shops around the city, as well as becoming a vagabond ink slinger in both







New Jersey and Miami.

Early in his career, Tito was approached by “Miami Ink’s,” Ami James to become part of his expanding shop, and when Garcia took him up on his offer, he never looked back—further cementing his pride in becoming an artist. “I really began to learn and obtain knowledge of the Japanese style through Ami James, [and] because of him, I learned the foundations of layout, flow, design, and folklore meanings,” Garcia recalls.

Not only did James mold Garcia into a well-respected ink slinger, while his stint in New York City, Tito was initially taught by New York City artists, Marco Serio and Kiku, before sowing his creative oats with South Beach Tattoo’s Federico Ferroni in Miami. Garcia still managed to find different skills that helped shape his newfound career, even from artists from the north and south. “Kiku and Federico helped me develop my technical skills as a tattoo artist,” he states.

With encouragement from his peers, and his brewing self-confidence, Garcia decided to venture off on his own, opening up his own shop in the summer of 2009—Euphoria Ink Tattoo Studio and Body Piercing in Roselle, New Jersey. For the past two years, the studio has been an incredible local success, which is accredited to Garcia’s solid group of tattooists—Sean Foy and Ted Wallen—whose intricate flash pieces help build Euphoria’s vastly growing clientele, while still benefitting from Garcia’s knowledge and expertise of the inked art form.









Although Garcia's decade-long in the ink industry has woven a tapestry of experience, he admits he enjoys a challenge, preferring to ink large scale, colored, Japanese imagery. "Preparation is the toughest, and most important part of tattooing [a large scale piece]. When I sit down with a client looking for large scale work, I like to get an idea of all the elements they'd like to incorporate into the piece while considering the design," he says. Garcia means it when he says he looks at all the facets of a delicate piece, as his longest large-scale tattoo extended to about nine sessions to complete.

While some tattooists would just tattoo anything their clients requested without thinking it over twice, Tito admits that he offers suggestions in order to give the customers a piece they'll be proud of donning for the rest of their lives. "If I don't think an idea of theirs is ideal, I'll let them know, and work on an alternative," he says.

When asked about colors muting on darker skin tones, Garcia suggests the black and grey route. "Aside from color pigments being muted, they become muddy. A black and grey approach is much more flattering to the skin tone in my opinion."

Tito Garcia's time from an amateur New York artist to working with South Beach's big leagues and becoming a business owner himself, only proved one thing: For this impressive ink slinger, life sure is euphoric. ♦

Euphoria Ink

584-A Raritan Road
Roselle, NJ 07203
908-925-4330
euphoriaink.com
tattoosbytito.com



SEAN

Photography by Dan Howell

Article by Ben Westhoff

Hair and makeup by Crystal Paige (crystalpaigebeauty.com)



THE PEN

22 URBAN INK

GARRETT

Atlanta's own, Sean Garrett is best known as a songwriter and producer, responsible for hits like Usher's, "Yeah!," Beyoncé's, "Diva," Nicki Minaj's, "Massive Attack," Jay-Z's, "Dig A Hole," among others. Yet, in recent years, Garrett has begun to break out as an artist himself, and this summer, he's scheduled to release his second solo album, *Courtesy Of*. His single, "Feel Love" – featuring J. Cole – is making noise, and with a nickname of the "The Pen" given by Jay-Z—Garrett spoke with *Urban Ink* about the spoils of wealth, his favorite artists to work with, and what gets under his skin.

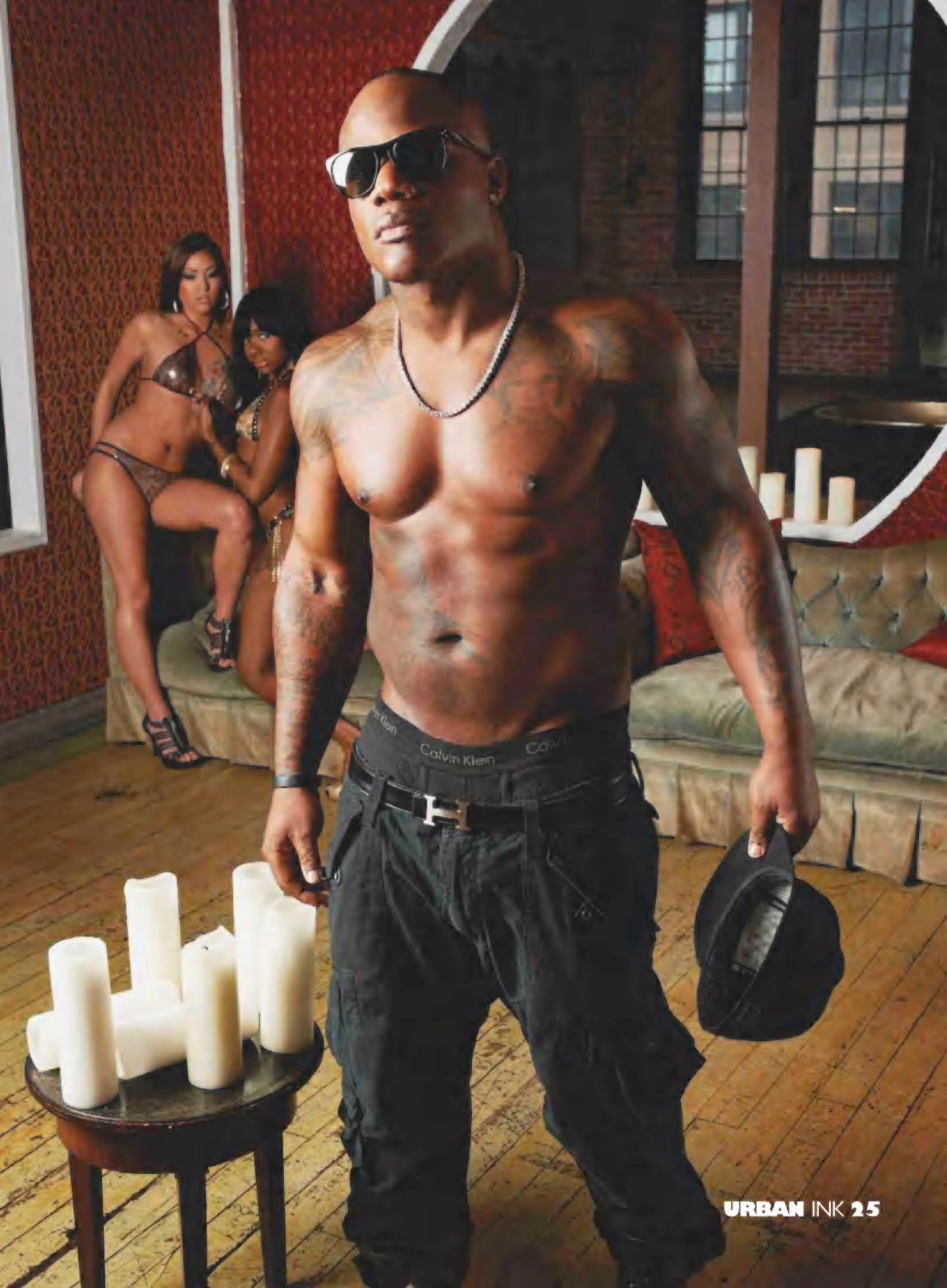


& HIS INK

URBAN INK 23



TONI MONROE





TRACED LEWIS



URBAN INK: Around the time “Yeah!” came out, you said you weren’t caught up in the hype of trying to be a superstar. Is it fair to say that your perspective has changed?

Sean Garrett: Being an artist is what’s in my blood. Working in the studio, producing records, performing on stage, going city-to-city, putting together great albums, and performing them are all things I love to do. [Pauses] I guess maybe I am on my superstar sh*t now [Laughs].

What is your goal on your next album?

I want to give the fans an album with eight smash records on it, so they feel like, ‘Damn, I got my money’s worth,’ or, ‘I learned something.’ I think the true essence of being a great artist is being able to evolve and grow. The same way I look back now at Bobby Brown’s *Don’t Be Cruel*, or Usher’s *Confessions*, and say, ‘Those were some of my favorite R&B albums.’

You’ve got new projects coming up with Beyoncé, John Legend, and even Justin Bieber. How do you get into the headspace of a 17-year-old megastar teen?

Keeping it all the way real with him. Just because you’re winning, and you’re all over the place, you’ve still got to keep it realistic to the fans you dealing with. You have to cater to the fans—at all costs. Artists fall off because they don’t do that, but if you do, they’ll support you for life.

You’ve said Beyoncé is your favorite artist to work with.

How come?

She’s one of the hardest working artists I’ve ever worked with in my life. She was very helpful in getting me my new deal at Columbia as an artist. She’s always been very wonderful to me—[she’s also been] the same person since day one.

You’ve been a part of so many hit songs over the years. Have you made any indulgent purchases recently?

Last year, I bought myself that new Ferrari 458—all white—white interior and white outside. I got the first Ferrari 458 made in America. God is good.

After “Yeah!”—which was the number two song in the entire ‘00s decade—what are some of your other most lucrative songs?

A lot of the Beyoncé records did really well. The great thing about her is that she does so many copies of the record—





an international album, a remix album, a greatest hits album. You wind up getting that one record on four albums. It starts to really add up.

Who does your tattoo work?

I have a couple of artists, but there's one guy in Atlanta named Randy [Tattoos by Randy] who did the majority of my work, my portraits and all of that.

The ink you have on your shoulders is pretty amazing. Is it, like, outlines of your muscles?

Yeah, [it shows] what's under your skin, your muscle tissue—the fibers in your muscles. I'd never seen that before. It represents The Bionic Man.

What other work do you have?

I also have a portrait of my mom on my left chest. On my [stomach], I have a portrait of my son, Chris. On my left arm, I just have a tat of my headphones and microphone, and 'To The Last Breath.' I put that on me in 2003. On my neck, I have a pen with ink coming out of it.

And then, on your forearm sleeve, you've got writing of

some sort. What is it, specifically?

It's a letter to my mom, Rita. I lost her eight years ago. She's the one that helped me through everything in [my life], who taught me to handle the stuff I go through day in and day out. It's a letter that I wrote thanking her, and telling her how much I appreciate her. ❖



Jacqueline Carr

Living Portrait

Photography
by Bryan Mack Butler
Article by Bruce Terry

Jacqueline Carr is a living, breathing portrait whose images express her spiritual connection with both nature and art. Her tattoos are genuine stories that continually evolve as she experiences life, as they eclectically illustrate someone who is filled with adventure, giving insight into a personality that overflows with her passion and conviction.

An artist with exceptional talents and character, Carr rejects conformity while championing the innocent and vulnerable. Her exquisite body is a canvass of her experiences, which encompasses her creative traits as an actress, dancer, model, singer/songwriter, and designer.

The tree on her back symbolizes her relationship with Mother Nature, and the intense passion and sexuality within her. The tribal encircling her tiny waist reveals flowers and butterflies symbolizing her femininity, delicacy, and sweet sensuality, while the dragon spiraling her well-toned leg reflects her power, ferocity, and

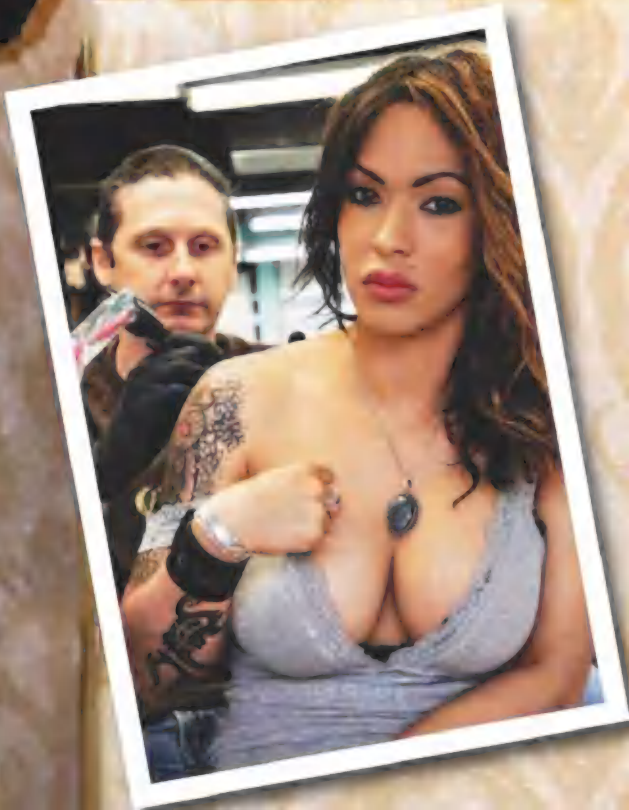


BO URBAN INK

fearless courage. This is the spirit of a fighter!

The owl is her self-professed sacred bird: Mysterious, beautiful, wise, and unique. It lives at night—just like Jacquel—separating itself from all other birds that tremble at its sight. On her inner forearm is a treble clef, microphone and several music notes, which is a stylized collage symbolizing her love of music as a writer, singer, and outstanding performer.

Lastly, if there is a question of her power, mystery and love of sex—just look at her Scorpio ink marked on her outer forearm, which she claims makes her the envy of many. Watch out for this hissing hottie, because this Renaissance woman is sure to bite—and you just might like it. ♦



THE TEXAS SHOWDOWN TATTOO AND MUSIC FEST! BEST OF THE WEST

Photography by Ernie Bustamante
Article by Mila Ortega

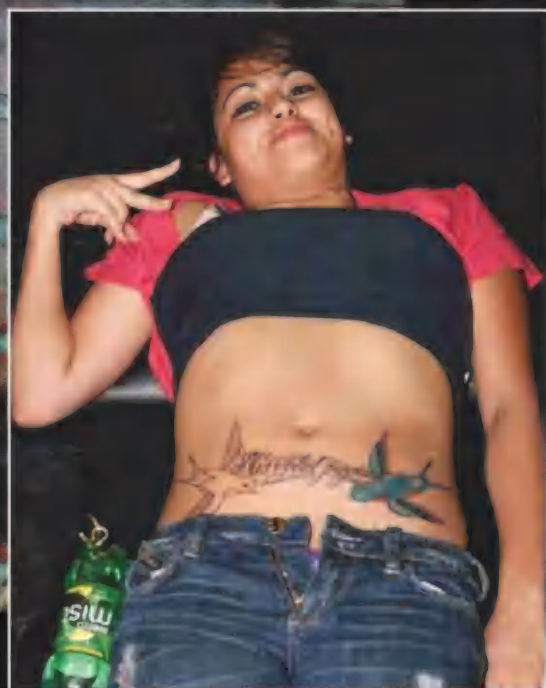
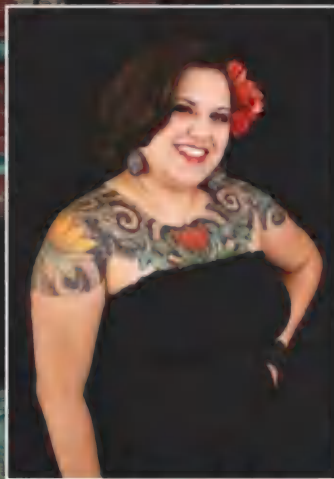
As if the climate in Texas in the summer wasn't already hot enough to melt the ink right off one's skin, the first Texas Showdown Tattoo and Music Fest swept into the city of El Paso last July, bringing the temperature in the Lone Star State way above the white hot mark. The convention was housed in the El Paso County Coliseum, and while the saying, "Things are always bigger in Texas," which most times holds true—the old adage did not apply to this event; but this time, it was a good thing.

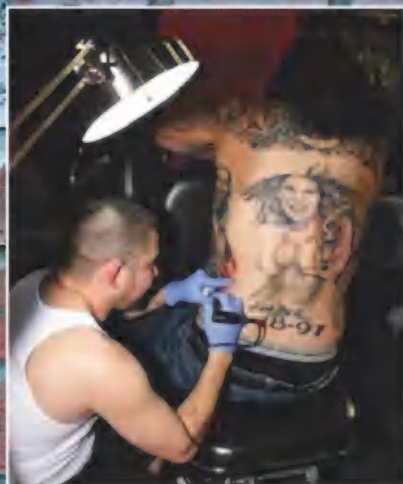
Although the huge venue offered the impression that this was going to be a very large and impersonal convention, the vibe at the El Paso joint was extremely intimate and collector friendly.

The intimate setting proved to be beneficial while approaching artists like Roman of Artistic Element in Yucaipa, California. The unhurried atmosphere of the event allowed artists such as Roman to bring the more personal aura that surrounds his shop to his interaction with attendees rather than the unavoidable big business type experience that so often goes along with the: "More the merrier" exposure of the bigger shows.

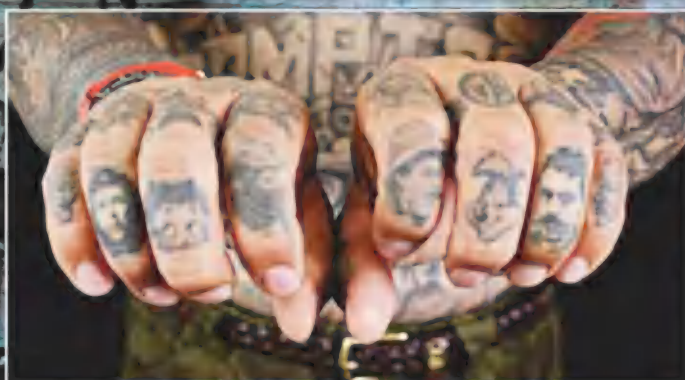
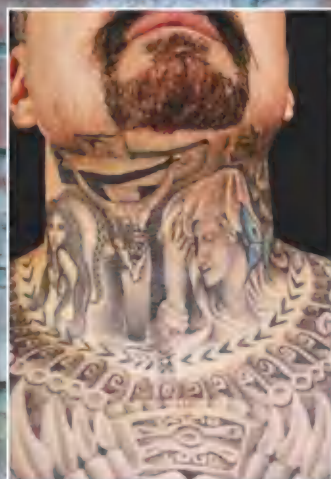
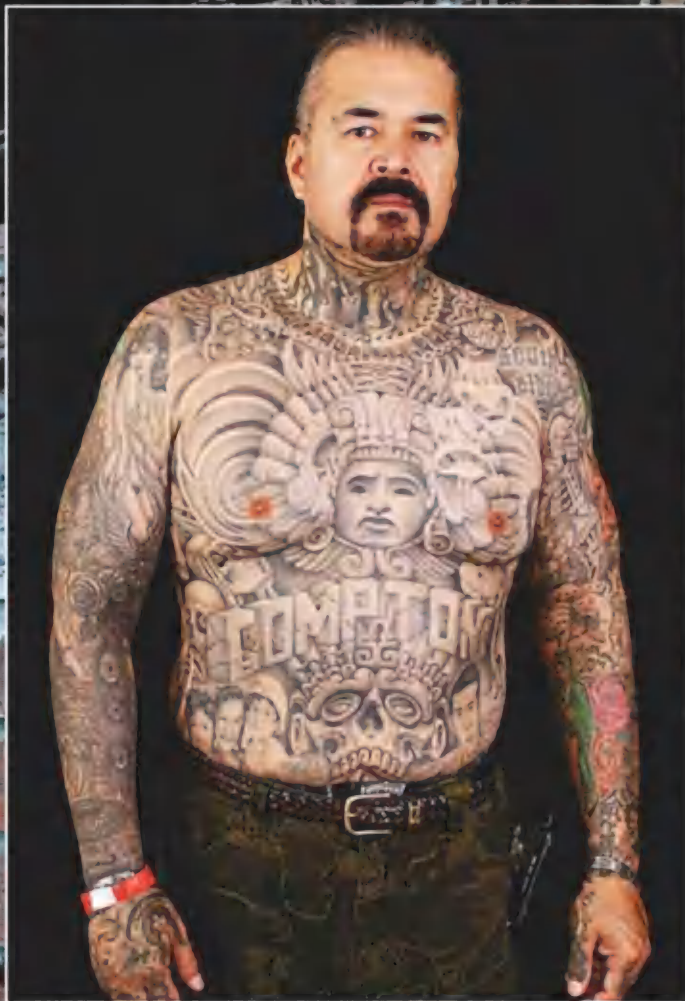
Though the intimate element of the festival added dimension to the show's personality, none of this is to say











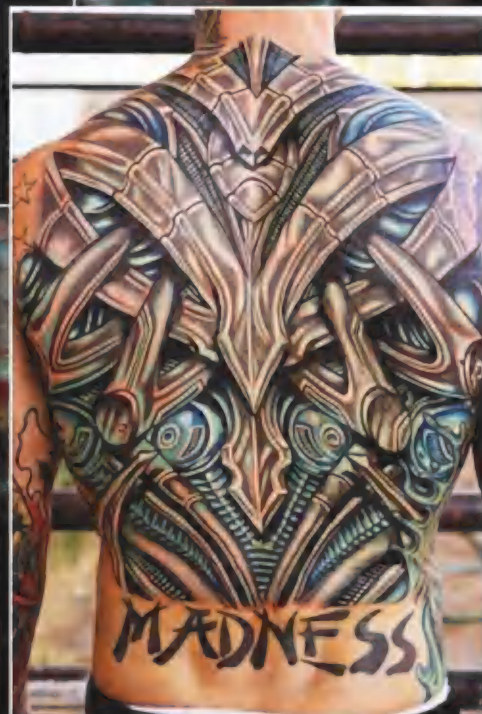
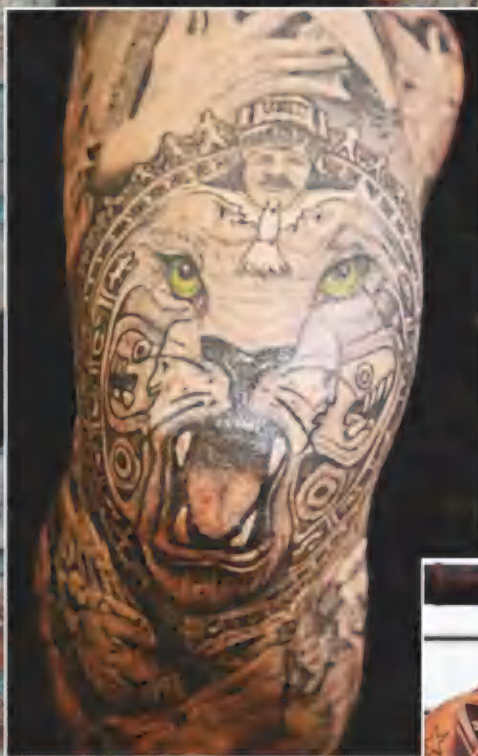
that The Showdown didn't kill when it came to attendance, or providing more than enough bang for your buck in the way of artists, merch booths, and entertainment. A strong and steady flow of hardcore collectors and novices infiltrated the festival floor at a steady pace.

This showing of support left no doubt to organizers and attendees alike that The Texas Showdown was embraced by the locals, as well as a strong showing of national and international visitors and slingers. One of the more prominent, and well-received tatted styles was the Mexican ink influence, which was evident throughout the show. It's no secret that the Mexi-tat style has never been riding higher in the U.S. as it is in the present—and there was no shortage of intricate sugar skull designs and other Día de los Muertos-related tattoos on display—or being freshly inked to the skin of attendees.

Outside of the tattooists, others manning booths and putting on unforgettable exhibitions, ranged from gorgeous ladies enticing visitors to try their luck at winning a custom motorcycle, roster members of the Extreme Midget Wrestling brand, and a suspension performance that was merely jaw dropping.

While live music played a deep part at the convention, the focus still remained on the tattoos, leaving the heavy background noise as a spice to the show, but not the main ingredient. The Texas Showdown Convention—much like other combo fests like Ink&Iron and MusInk—provided all of the tattoo content and activities that attendees could handle. In fact, the music element of the show enhanced the inked multicultural experience that served as a strong element of The Showdown, and one of the reasons that the event will remain on many convention calendar “must see” lists for years to come.

The Texas Showdown Convention returns to the El Paso County Coliseum for round two this July 1-3. Visit: myspace.com/texastattooshowdown/ for all the 411. ♦



A woman is lying on her back on a white, shaggy rug. She is wearing a blue bikini top and black high-heeled shoes. Her legs are extended towards the left side of the frame. On her right calf, there is a tattoo of a bird in flight. The background is a wall covered in a black and white damask pattern. Overlaid on the wall is the name 'Lyka Dee' in a large, pink, cursive font with a white outline.

Lyka Dee

Living in the Here & Now

38 URBAN INK



Photography by Ama Lea
Article by Jen Gomez

Hailing from the sunny side of California in Long Beach, Lyla Dee emerges in a creative canon as a proudly tatted artist, model and actress, making this quirky SoCal gal a true show biz triple threat. Luckily, *Urban Ink* caught up with her as she shed her skin, while sharing the themes behind her pieces, including: Positive affirmations, her passion for music, the great losses of loser ex-boyfriends, and the one tattoo she regrets.





URBAN INK: Which is more exciting for you, performing in movies, music videos or print modeling?

Lyla Dee: I have fun with everything I do, and I like to make it a fun experience for whomever I work with as well. If I would have to pick, I would say performing in movies; only because it's fairly new to me since I've done music most of my life. It's more challenging, but super-fun to play a different role.

When you got your: "I rather lose a love than love a loser" tat, did you have any particular "loser" in mind?

Loser or losers? [Laughs] I think I've had my fair share of douchebags in the past, and one day, I just got fed up. I

wanted to get something that would remind me everyday about what I'm worth. I got that piece done at Hart and Huntington Tattoo in Hawaii by James.

What other artists have worked on you?

I am very picky about who I work with, and I find myself going to the same people. A good friend of mine—Horny Mike—started the music piece on my arm. That piece has always been the icebreaker for many who start to converse with me. Phil, from Sick Dogs finished the shading, and many, many more pieces on my body.

What inspired you to get the lettering that you have on your left forearm?

It's a simple, but powerful quote. Basically, throughout the





struggle, [between] cruel people I meet and [every] hardship in my life, I simply just think: 'Here and now, life and love.'

Music is also a big theme in your ink. Can you talk about your music?

Music has always been my passion. It's where I excel, and can just be me. There's no right or wrong in music, just dream, believe, and create. My whole family does music, and I want to follow in my mother's footsteps. It's a hard industry to break into, and I met so many bad people along the way, but I will never quit. I don't care if I never get a deal, as long as I'm still performing and creating, I can die happy.

What is the story—and significance—of the piece on the right side of your back?

Everyone is allowed one f*cked up tattoo, and that is my

f*cked up tattoo [Laughs]. It was my first tattoo, and I got it on my 18th birthday. I went in with a whole different design, and came out with a cocked-eyed fairy with big boobs standing on top of the lettering, 'Foolish.' And that's exactly what I was at that time.

Would you say that you are more likely to get a tattoo because the piece has a deep meaning to you, or because of how beautiful the design will look on your skin?

Most definitely, the reason is the deep meaning and placement. That's everything to me—except for my f*cked up tattoo, which doesn't count. Every piece has a story—and placement is everything.

Where are the best places to find you online?

You can find me on: facebook.com/lyladee or lyladeemusic.com—which is coming soon! ♦

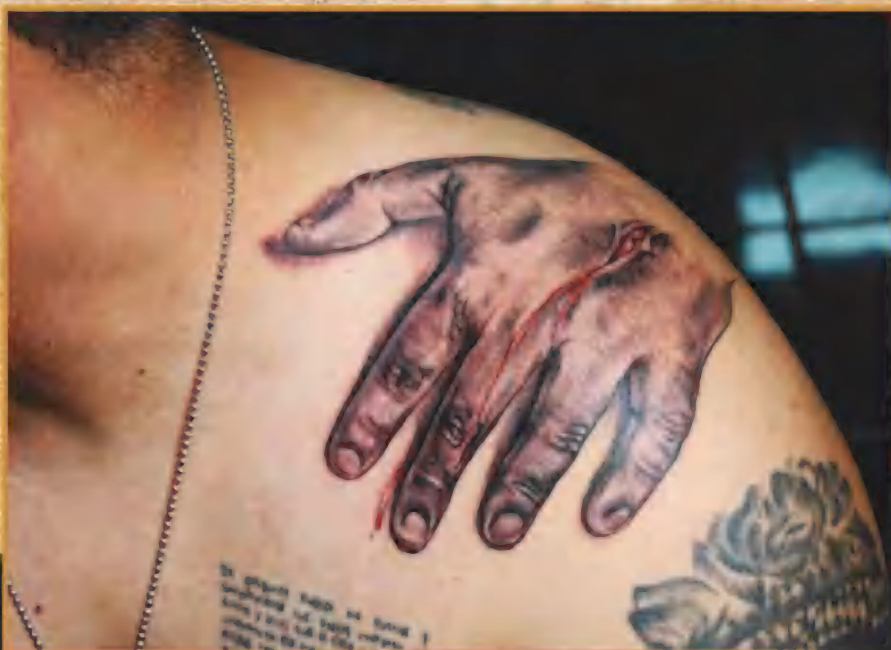
SHOPS and ARTISTS



Benjamin “Bengie” Archilla Caribbean Ink Factory

Article by Emmanuel Ureña

Born and raised in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, Benjamin Archilla, known best as Bengie, was bit with the artistic bug at an early age. As he grew older, Bengie found his niche with drawing, however, not once throughout his teen years did he ever think about tattooing as a possibility. It wasn't until the age of 18 when Bengie was introduced to a tattoo gun. After experimenting on his close friends for a few years, the novice tattooist landed a gig needling ink on skin at Cuttin' Edge Tattoo in Bayamón—where he







worked for six years mastering his craft. Today, Bengie's a dedicated, award-winning tattoo artist with his own shop, Ink Factory—located in Vega Alta, PR on the island's northern coast.

URBAN INK: *Can you tell us about your first experience with the tattoo gun, and how you were introduced to tattooing?*

Bengie Archilla: I bought my first machine as a hobby—out of pure curiosity. I started tattooing friends, and I liked it so much that I started to get better equipment, and taking it more seriously. I began learning new techniques and observing works of other artists that were on top of the tattoo industry.

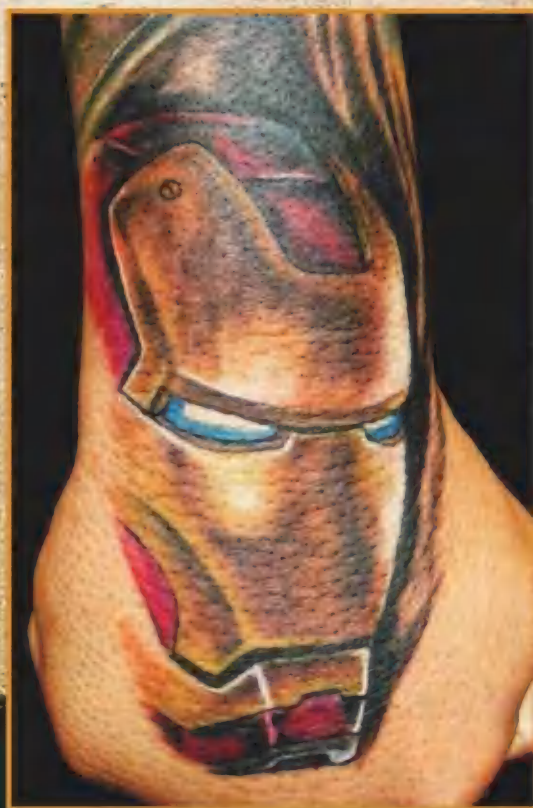
Once you were introduced to tattooing, how did you realize that tattooing was the career for you?

While my friends concentrated on college, I was concentrated on tattooing, and I couldn't see myself doing anything other than tattooing. *How did the job at Cuttin' Edge come about?*

The owner of Cuttin' Edge saw my work from some people I tattooed and liked my work, and offered me a spot in the shop.

Did you have to start as an apprentice at Cuttin' Edge, or did





you start tattooing as soon as you were hired?

I started tattooing from the start—doing small tattoos and helping to do little jobs around the shop.

Being that Ink Factory is located in a dream vacation spot, do you get a lot of tourists coming into your shop?

Yes, I get tourists in the shop, but the most of my clients are locals.

A person with your talent must stay booked up all year 'round.

How long is the wait to get tattooed by you?

I work hard, enjoying what I do, trying not to make my clients wait a long time for their appointments. *What would you say is your busiest season of the year?*

The whole year is very busy, but summer is my busiest season.

Skilled tattooists seem to be springing from all over the world. How do you keep up in the competition?

Always learning new techniques, never settling with the work that I've already done.

From the look of your work, it's evident that you're really into realism and portraits. Do you practice any other styles?

Yes, I've worked Japanese, black and grey and full color. I really worked everything, but realism and portrait is what really captured my attention.

What are some of the awards you've won at the tattoo conventions you've attended?

I have won 'Best Portrait,' 'Best Realism,' 'Tattoo of the Day,' 'Best Black and Grey' and 'Full Arm.'

Have you ever participated in conventions outside of Puerto Rico?

I was more concentrated on my art—not in competing—but this year I have plans of going outside of Puerto Rico to show my art to the world. ♦

Ink Factory

Carr. #2 Km. 28.2 Int. 694,

Barrio Espinosa

Vega Baja, Puerto Rico

Vega Alta, United States, 00692

(787) 883-1133





TRAVIS PORTER

Photography by Chad Hess (chadhess.com)

Article by Ben Westhoff, Stylist: Troi Anthoni

In only about two years, the hip-hop trio, Travis Porter, has gone from virtual-unknowns—to one of the fastest-rising groups in the genre. Featuring stepbrothers, Donquez “Quez” Woods and Lakeem “Ali” Mattox, in addition to their longtime friend, Harold “Strap” Duncan—all 20-years-old—the act built an underground following through tracks like their collaboration with Roscoe Dash, “Turnt Up.” In late 2010, they signed with Jive Records, with fans waiting with bated breath for the release of their album; which, as of press time, has been untitled. *Urban Ink* spoke with them about how to stay humorous in a serious scene, the importance of having a label, and how to cope with the band’s ever-evolving personalities.



UP-&-COMING INK



URBAN INK: What are the biggest differences in the group members' individual personalities?

Strap: I'm more chill and relaxed. I put on a good show, but I'm more low key. Quez is a funny dude, and Ali is f*cking wild. All of us are so different.

How did you guys meet?

Strap: Me and Quez met in sixth grade at Miller Grove Middle School [in Decatur, Georgia], and I met Ali through Quez.

How would you describe your upcoming album?

Strap: It's gonna be crazy. It's been a long time coming, so, I think there's gonna be a lot more growth—showing people it's not a mixtape. A lot of new producers—big time producers—and maybe a couple features. The official release date is August 2nd. We don't have an official title yet.

Your videos like: "Make It Rain" and "Bring It Back" are really funny. Is being humorous important to you as a group?

Strap: You can't be too humorous, but you can't be serious all the time. Everyone wants to have fun. If you throw a little funny part in, why not? It's about putting on a show—it's about entertainment.



QUEZ







What do you feel was the main turning point for your group?

Strap: The turning point was about three years ago, when Quez got shot. We all realized that the [foolishness] wasn't worth it. We was too young, and too talented. All three of us just got on the same page.

How will being signed to Jive help you?

Strap: Jive will help us take it worldwide. We need that international look—that bigger look. Hopefully, as long as we do our part—they'll do their part—and Travis Porter will be a household name.

Are you content to be known for party music, or do you want to be known for more than that?

Strap: We might be known for party music through our biggest songs, but if you look back to our mixtapes, we've made all types of music over the years.

Who does your tattoo work?

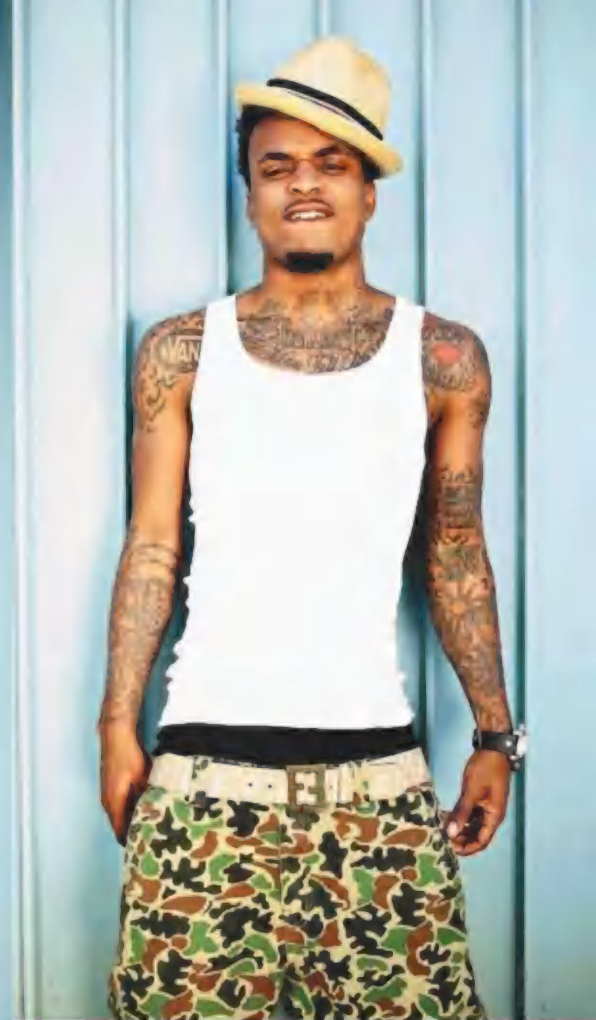
Strap: I got an artist in High Point, North Carolina. I don't know his name. I've also got a dude in Miami, and two dudes in Atlanta I let touch up my stuff. I'm looking for a new tattoo artist. I let the dude in Miami do Tupac on my back, but I want real detailed portraits, so I am looking for a new guy.

STRAP



URBAN INK





You've got a big cross on your chest, and a million other things. What inspires you to get tattoos?

Strap: Life inspires me to get them. The stuff I go through—the good and the bad times. I've got, 'Proud To Be A Problem' on my arm. A couple of spots I ain't finished touching up yet. I used to like artwork when I was smaller. I used to draw a lot. I would draw my Jordans—my Air Force Ones. I would take them off, set them on my desk and draw them, and get in trouble [Laughs]. My favorite tattoo is the stamp for our record label—'Porter House'—on my back. All three of us have that one. Ali got it on his arm, and Quez got in on his chest.

Ali and Quez, tell us about your tats.

Ali: My tattoos are symbols of my life. Everything I go through, people can see on my body. We can't always tell our entire story in person, so this gives the fans something to look at.

Quez: They're art. They're a combination of family, my thoughts, and things that inspire me. If it has permeated me, it means something to me. So, all of them serve a purpose, and I'm living each purpose daily. ♦



Shady Records recording artist, Ca\$his.

Photography by
Pep Williams

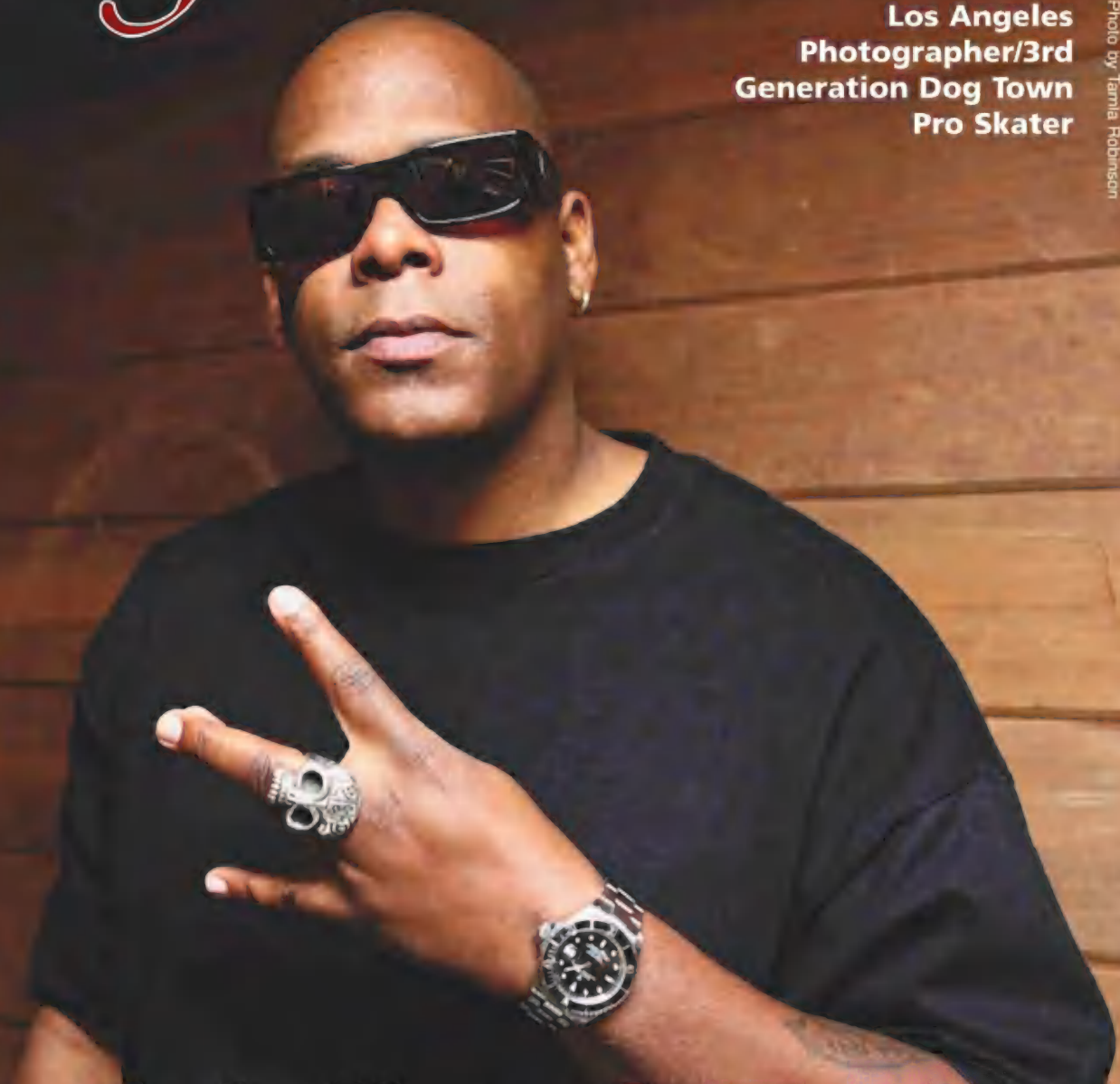
Article by
Emmanuel Ureña



Pep Williams

Los Angeles
Photographer/3rd
Generation Dog Town
Pro Skater

Photo by Tania Robinson



Fresh & Raw Snapshots

It's easy to spot Los Angeles photographer, Pep Williams's fresh, raw and gritty work. For 14 years, the Los Angeles based photog has graced numerous publications with his stellar lens work. The model turned shutterbug never realized he possessed the skills to capture images as well as he does. That is, until one fateful day—while Williams was getting ready to model at a fashion show—he had to save the day and step in as a photographer after a hired cameraperson pulled a no-show. Now, over a decade later, Williams's career has blossomed from eye-catching images of his tattooed homies and models hard at work—capturing the most intricate and delicate designs he can find.



Mr. & Mrs. Sly Vicious



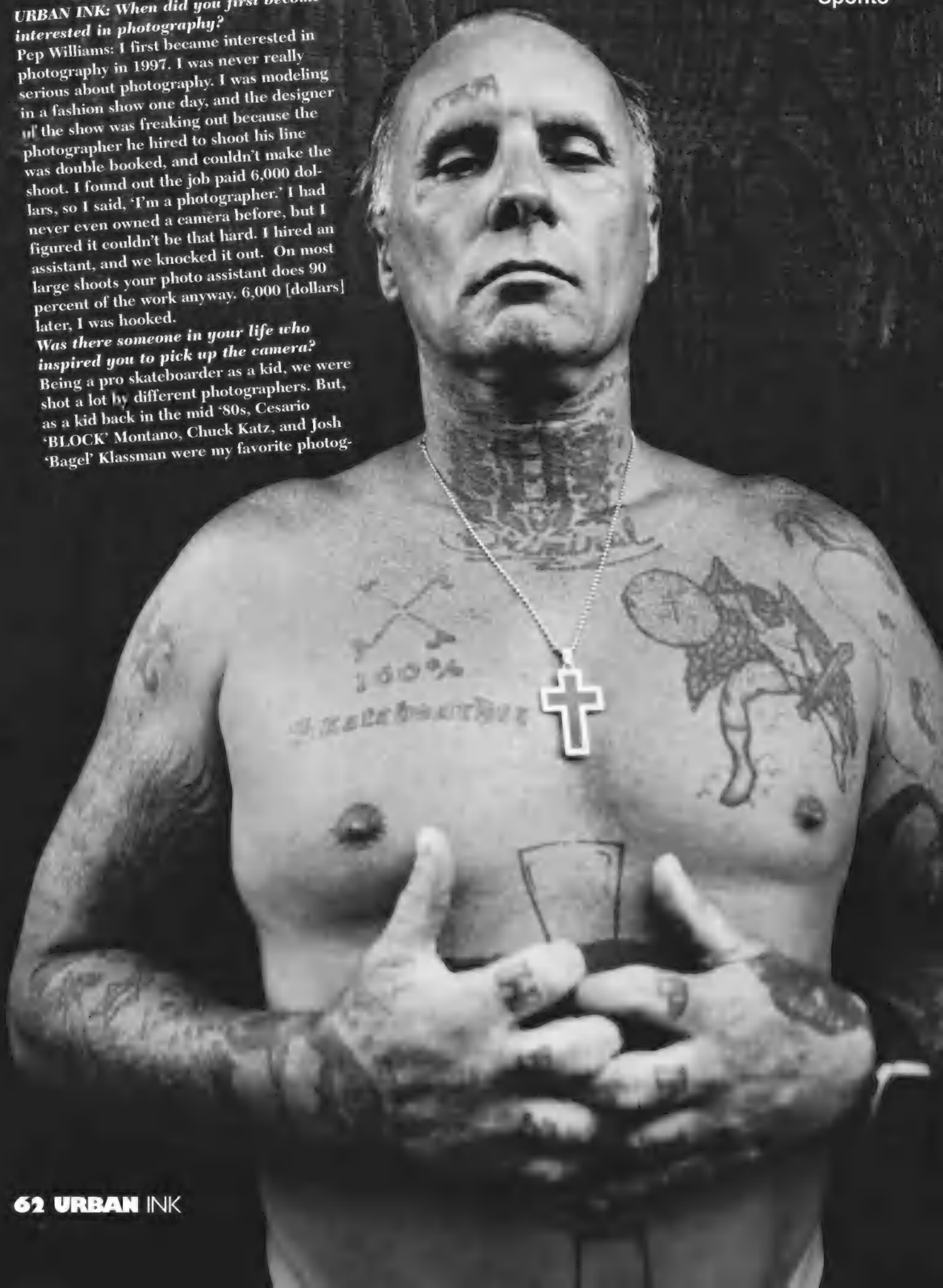


URBAN INK: *When did you first become interested in photography?*

Pep Williams: I first became interested in photography in 1997. I was never really serious about photography. I was modeling in a fashion show one day, and the designer w/ the show was freaking out because the photographer he hired to shoot his line was double booked, and couldn't make the shoot. I found out the job paid 6,000 dollars, so I said, 'I'm a photographer.' I had never even owned a camera before, but I figured it couldn't be that hard. I hired an assistant, and we knocked it out. On most large shoots your photo assistant does 90 percent of the work anyway. 6,000 [dollars] later, I was hooked.

Was there someone in your life who inspired you to pick up the camera?

Being a pro skateboarder as a kid, we were shot a lot by different photographers. But, as a kid back in the mid '80s, Cesario 'BLOCK' Montano, Chuck Katz, and Josh 'Bagel' Klassman were my favorite photog-



Jay Adams





Placaso tatting up Huero in
Los Angeles on Skid Row.





raphers. Their images were in all of the skateboard magazines at the time.

Did you attend school, or participate in some sort of training for photography?

[I] never attended school for photography. I just went with the flow, and actually learned by shooting for large clients. **What inspired you to take photography to a more professional level?**

I just enjoy shooting. It can be for a huge client or homie—I just enjoy it.

Which would you say was your first major photography project? What did you have to do to execute the project?

My first major job was actually my first shoot. I didn't even own a camera. I just saw an opportunity and jumped in. It was for IZOD—a part of Lacoste.

What are some other major projects you have been involved in?

Over the years, I've pretty much shot [for] every skateboarding magazine, men's lifestyle, mountain bike magazines, action sports magazines, and a ton of fashion stuff. **You've also delved into photographing tattooed individuals. What is it that attracted you to this subject matter?**

I just decided to shoot what I wanted, and started with my friends. About 98 percent of the people on my site are my friends. I got tired of looking at my work in magazines, and it just looked like everyone else[s]. You tend to shoot what the client wants and they usually all copy each other, so everyone's work looks the same. So, I just decided to shoot what I wanted.

You seem to have a knack for capturing the intricate details on tattoos. What's your trick when doing this? Is it something that deals with the lighting? Or, do you oil your subjects up to make their tats pop?

I just shoot it the way it is. No makeup or anything. I never touch-up my pics. I just lighten it or darken it. To me, the minute you remove something from the image, it takes away the truth of the image. Even if no one knows you used Photoshop, you still know you did inside. I just like it pure—scabs, scratches and dirt.

What tips do you have for up-and-coming photographers who are trying to get into the competitive field of photography?

The tip I would give is [that] you have to eat, so sometimes you have to shoot something you really aren't into. The trick is not to let it take over your style, or your soul. Do what the client wants, but don't get lost in their world. **Are you involved, or plan to involve yourself in any other forms of media—like movies, or video production, perhaps?**

I have been messing around with directing. Me and my bro, Ras Kass, have been talking about a few video concepts, and [I'm] also talking to a few other artists as well. **Your bio describes your photography as the "Freshest kind of raw." Can you elaborate on this?**

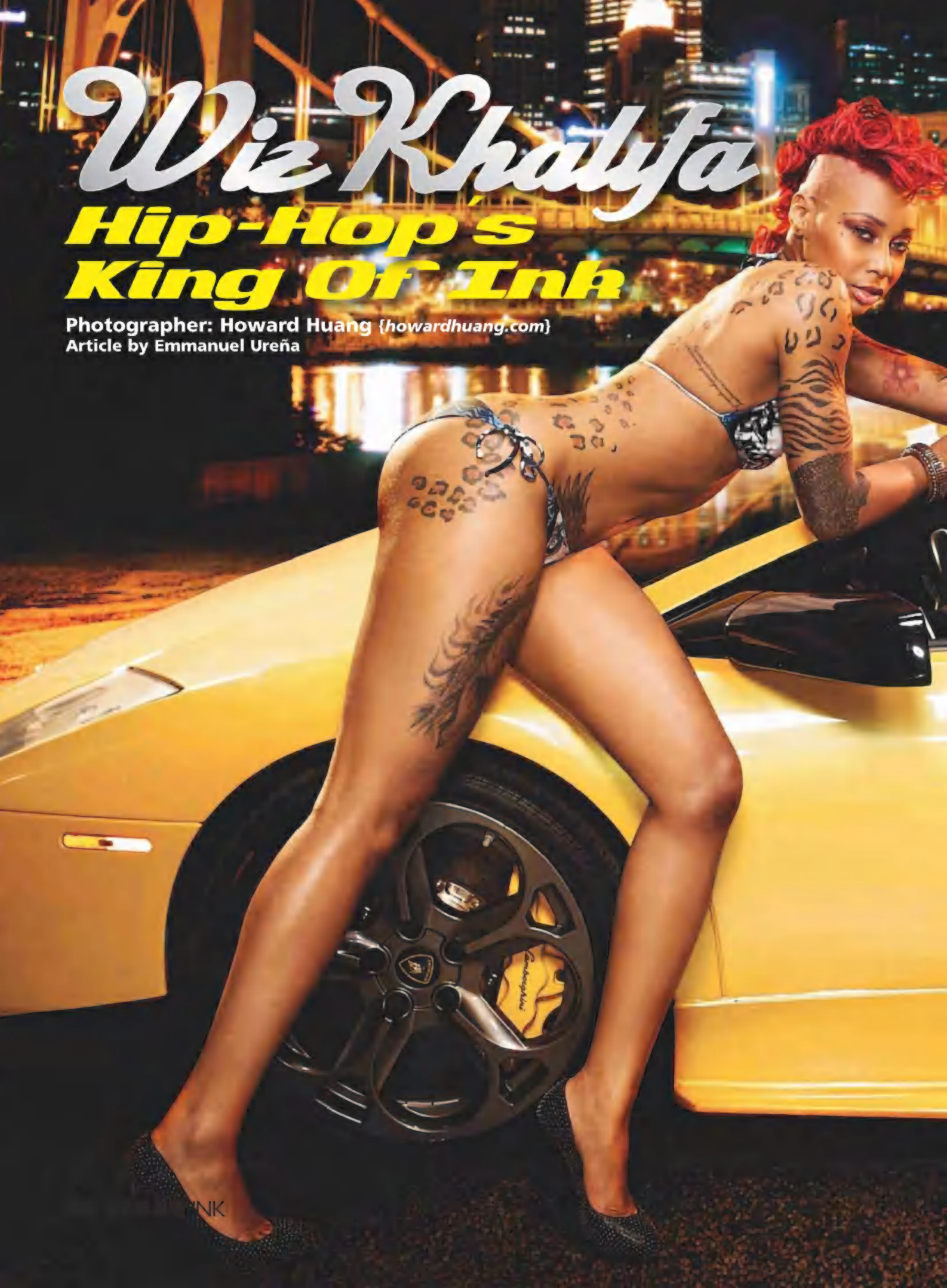
Chloe Gallagher came up with the term over at the Curbs and Stoops blog. My work is exactly as you see it—raw. No altering at all. And the content I choose to shoot I tend to keep the same style from shooting a big celeb like Soulja Boy to shooting a tree. I just keep it 'Fresh and raw.' ♦

Wiz Khalifa

Hip-Hop's King Of Ink

Photographer: Howard Huang {howardhuang.com}

Article by Emmanuel Ureña



The rise to the top for Pittsburgh, PA emcee, Wiz Khalifa, wasn't an easy one to say the least. He went from being signed to major label, Warner Bros. Records in 2007—to leaving the label after only two years of reported delays in releasing his first planned album, *First Flight*.

Typically, any other artist would call it a wrap, however, this made Wiz grind harder. 2010 proved to be more pinnacle for the rapper, as his mixtape, *Kush & Orange Juice* and his number one single, "Black And Yellow" would soon catapult the Steelers fan with the Los Angeles swag to superstardom.

Now at home with Atlantic Records, Khalifa released his chart-topping debut, *Rolling Papers*—which spawned smash hit singles that have been on steady rotation on the radio. Add a cross-country tour and a film project with none other than Snoop Dogg to his repertoire, and it's evident that the self-proclaimed "King of Ink" has come up in a big way.



A full-page photograph of Nikki Sweets, a woman with extensive tattoos, posing in a bright yellow sports car at night. She is wearing a black and white patterned bikini top and bottom, a red flower in her hair, and a chain around her neck. She is holding a whip. The background shows a city skyline with lit-up buildings and a bridge.

Nikki Sweets

URBAN INK: Was your first tattoo an impulse buy, or did you take some time to think it through carefully before getting it?

Nikki Sweets: My very first tattoo was an impulse. I was 14, very young, and everyone I knew had tattoos. I just wanted one, so I snuck out of the house late, and got myself a 30-dollar tattoo. [Laughs] *What does your body art say about you?*

To me, my body art says a lot about me. It speaks [about] my personality before you ever see my personality. You'll find out the deeper person in me by just asking about my tattoos.

Which of your tattoos is your most meaningful and why?

My most meaningful tattoo is the one under my arm that says, 'You said you didn't want to see me get hurt so does that mean you vise your eyes when I cry.' I got this because of the type of relationships I've been through with family and friends. It almost heals me when I remember that it's there. It's like a bandage from my hard times.

Who are your go-to tattoo artists?

My main artist is Eric in Indianapolis. He works at Steel Rod Tattoo on the west side of Indy. His contact is 317-414-2623. There's also another artist I go to back in Indy, and his name is Nitty. If you're in Atlanta, hit up CP. He has also done one of my tats.

Do you have any future projects you'd like our readers to know about?

My future projects are just getting more tats and working on this amazing career that I have now. I'm in the process of getting a website, but you can always reach me on Twitter

[at]: @Mz_nikkisweets.

Jasmine Brown

URBAN INK: Was your first tattoo an impulse buy, or did you take some time to think it through carefully before getting it?

Jasmine Brown: My first tattoo was the start of the piece on my lower stomach. I was actually 15, and used my sister's ID. [Laughs] I didn't give it much thought, but as I got older, I added on to it.

What does your body art say about you?

Well, the funny thing is, with clothes [on] you wouldn't even think that I had 13 tattoos! People are usually surprised when they see one that's visible, and they ask how many I have, and I tell them, '13!' [Laughs] So, I'd say they're silent, but deadly!

Which of your tattoos is your most meaningful and why?

On my shoulder, I have, 'Action Conquers Fear,' and that pretty much speaks for itself. You can't conquer your fear without action.

Who are your go-to tattoo artists?

Gino [305-624-3333] and Darren [786-444-7756] at Illustrated Ink: 17627 NW 27th Avenue Miami Gardens Florida, 33056.

Do you have any future projects you'd like our readers to know about?

Yes, actually I do, but I'm going to wait until I'm rich to get really tatted. [Laughs]

Twitter: @jazzygoetit



URBAN INK: *You're evidently one of most tattooed rappers in the game. How much of your body is tattooed at this point?*

Wiz Khalifa: I'd say more than 60 percent.

Do you consider yourself "top dawg" in the game as far as tattoos go?

There are a couple of other guys out there with tattoos, but I consider myself the 'King of Ink.' I don't only have a bunch of tattoos, but you know a lot of people tell me how decent my artwork is. I put a lot of time into it, and everything really goes together.

Who would you say has a chance to go for your ink crown? Who do you see as comp, as far as tattoos go?

You know, I don't see it as a competition. I admire a lot of different people's artwork, but for me, just like a lot of people; I think a lot of people are identified by their tattoos.

How much time do you take in between tattoos to think of what your next piece will be?

I usually put a couple of months in between now. Before, I would get a lot at a time because I was filling in a lot of space and stuff, but now, I'm really taking my time. I probably do two or three months in between.

Would you ever consider going full-body suit, or are there some places where you just wouldn't tattoo yourself?

I used to say I wouldn't go on my thighs, but now I think I am. I wouldn't get any on my feet, but I will on my thighs, though.

Who is your go-to tat artist?

I started getting tattoos out in Pittsburgh at a spot called Sinners & Saints. I still go there a little bit, but right now, I mess with my guy named Tookie. He's from L.A. and Atlanta, and he has a shop down there, but he really travels with me a lot, and hooks it up.

How much of your body art reflects your music career?

Probably just the music note [on my neck] reflects my music career. And I've got 'Wiz Khalifa' tattooed on my right arm, and I have 'Khalifa' tattooed on my back. But, you know [the art], it's just my life and how I feel, and just spiritually, the way that I treat myself and treat people—it's all just a reflection of that.

What experiences were you going through in your life when you tatted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote on yourself?

I had just signed with Warner, and I was just traveling a lot at that time, and watching a lot of movies. And the quote was in one of the movies, and I felt like that was a pretty decent thing to get tattooed on me, so I just rocked with it.

Currently, your album, *Rolling Papers* is at the top of the charts, a few of your singles are getting steady rotation on the radio, and you're out on a busy touring schedule. How are you dealing with this sudden rise to the top?

It's cool! It's fun! Especially for me, because I've been working for a long time preparing for it, so now being able to grasp it, and it's brand new. It's a real good experience. I'm getting a lot of new fans, and I'm shocking a lot of people, [and] letting people in on things they didn't know about me. It's a really good time for me. I'm having a lot of fun, and loving the work.

You're also working on a movie and soundtrack with Snoop Dogg, correct?

We're working on a movie. It's called *High School*. We actually start shooting it this Sunday [May 8]. I'm really excited about it. And the soundtrack as well is almost done, so that's going to be really exciting.

Can you go a little into the plot of the movie, or is it all under wraps?

For now, it's under wraps, but it's just going to be a really, really good buddy film. It's going to be a play off our relationship, not only as people, but also as in the music game. It's just going to be really, really fun!

How does it feel working with Snoop Dogg? I know you've mentioned that you looked up to him a lot.

One of the biggest deals for me is that I have [worked with him]. And it's great, not only getting the opportunity to work with him, but for him to have the respect for me that he does and for us to vibe on the level that we do. It's a dream come true. I get to be 'Little Snoop.'

Aside from your tats and your music, another thing that you're known for is for smoking a lot of weed. A few articles about you mention you smoking as soon as you get up in the morning and practically that you get high all day. How much of that is true?

A hundred percent of that is true.

[Laughs]







Fashion Stylist: Fatima B for Balan, Inc.,
Glam Agency (Wiz Khalifa)
Fashion Stylist: Marcus Blassingame (Models)
Makeup: Jackie Sanchez/Makeup For Ever
Hair: Lawanda Pierre
Lamborghini provided by
Signature Car Collection
(signaturecarcollection.com)

Are you high right now?

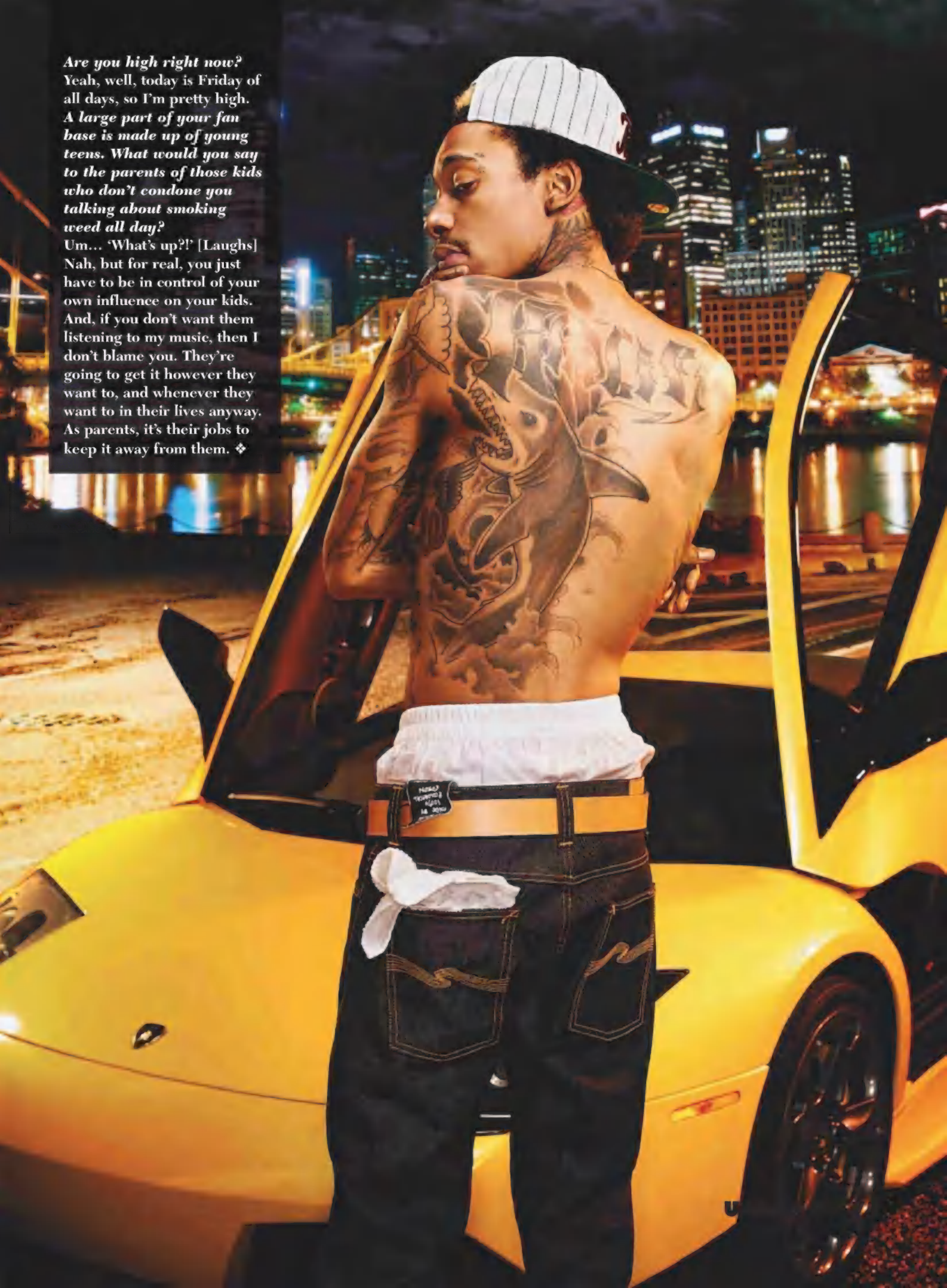
Yeah, well, today is Friday of all days, so I'm pretty high.

A large part of your fan base is made up of young teens. What would you say to the parents of those kids who don't condone you talking about smoking weed all day?

Um... 'What's up?!' [Laughs]

Nah, but for real, you just have to be in control of your own influence on your kids.

And, if you don't want them listening to my music, then I don't blame you. They're going to get it however they want to, and whenever they want to in their lives anyway. As parents, it's their jobs to keep it away from them. ♦



Urban Ink

Viz Khalifa





POSITIVE IMAGE TATTOOS

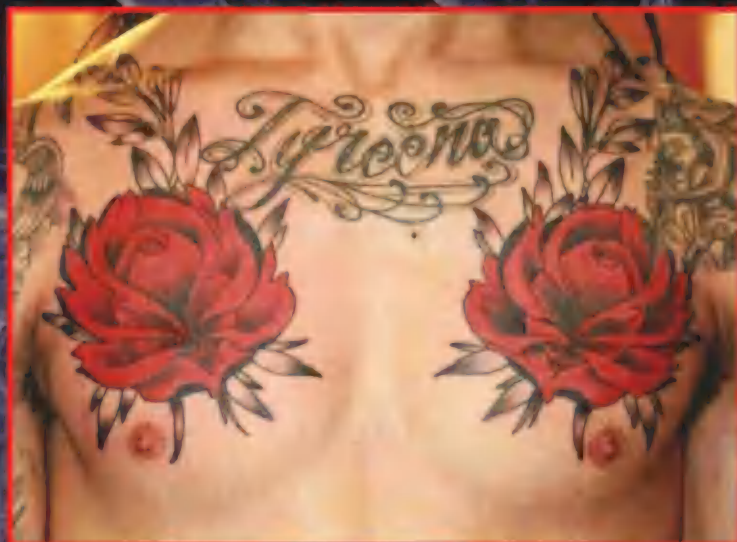
Flipping The Script

Article by Clive Young

Positive Image Tattoos opened its doors in the summer of 2004, located in the heart of Baltimore City—just a short, ten-minute drive from Baltimore's beautiful Inner Harbor—the shop quickly grew a buzz around the streets of B-More. Husband and wife owners, Angelina Giardina and Eric Caves, pride themselves on the fact that their shop offers a very pleasant atmosphere, and is known for their friendly, clean, and family-oriented environment—contesting the negative connotations ordinarily attached to tattoo shops—hence their title name.



Eric Caves



As a child, Eric Caves discovered his passion for art, drawing, and painting with his mother ever since he could remember. Originally from Baltimore, Caves was forced to move down to Savannah, Georgia at a very young age due to his stepfather's military obligations.

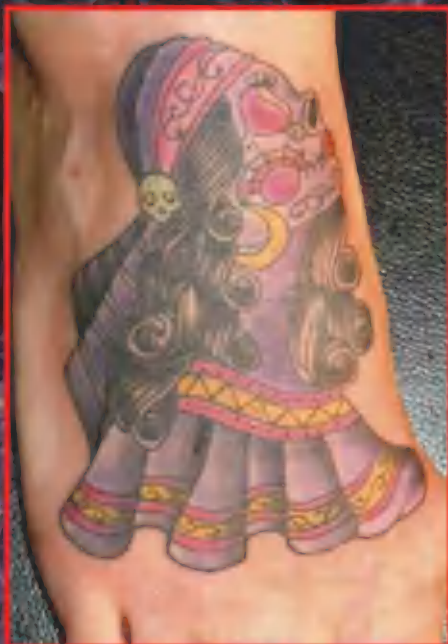
Growing up in Savannah—which is known for its artsy atmosphere—was very different than being raised on the East Coast. Caves was able to start up his artistry in the peaceful, deep South, however, he later returned to the mean streets of Baltimore where he blended his experiences in Georgia with the chaos and high-paced life of Charm City.

His artistic style became engulfed in the wave of new styles springing all around him. Eric would draw on anything and everything. His cousin, Tick—a street scratcher—had made the transition to ink slinger and was making good money, sparking Eric's interest—sort of. "I needed something for myself. I knew I could draw, but I was always afraid of the permanence of tattoos," Eric recalls. "It was peer pressure that forced me into my first tattoo, and it was love at first poke."

After a brush with the law, Eric's new hustle was brought to a halt—or so he thought. However, during his seven-year stay in prison, he became the go-to guy for tattoos. Inking the other inmates served as a source of income in the bing, as well as a way for him to stay neutral without being sucked in to any crews, gangs, or cliques. Caves also used it as practice—learning how to tattoo on all different shades of skin.

When Eric was released, he found himself with nowhere to go until just a few weeks later when a new light came into his life in the form of his soon-to-be wife, Angelina Giardina—a young saleswoman who, at the time, was working for Global Payments, Inc.—a





Baltimore based payment processing service. The young couple found that they both shared the same dream of one day owning a business that they could call their own. It was this motivation that fueled Eric to work full-time as an asphalt layer, while slinging ink on the side. During that time, Angelina got her marketing, sales, and customer service perfected while at her day job.

"I wanted to make tattooing my life. I tried to get a job at a tattoo shop, but was turned away from all the shops I went to. I realized that I had to find a way to make it work. I left my asphalt job to open a tattoo shop with my wife," Caves recalls. "It was a lot of work to get off the ground, and a long search to find the best artists to fit the shop. We finally had the crew we were looking for, and things were looking up. The shop was booming, and the work was tight. I feel the sky is the limit and life has just begun," he added. And it's safe to say, that in his short time as a business owner, this former badass from Baltimore still believes that dreams do come true.





Jason Kramer

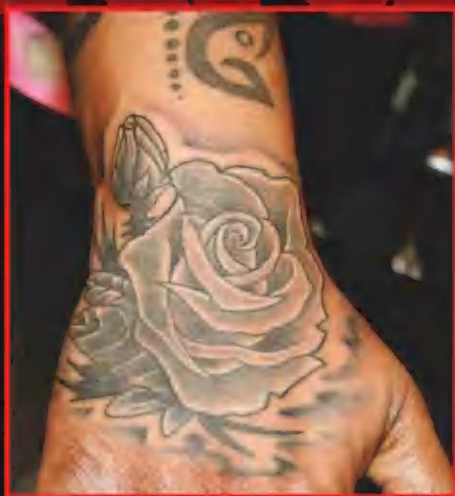
Jason Kramer grew up in the urban lifestyle of Baltimore with a pure passion for art. He began tagging anything he could—from highways, trains, bridges, and even his own bedroom. “I felt comfort in this thing people called art,” he expressed. “The wonderful thing about being an artist is that I can learn, learn, and learn. There is no end to the scope of it,” he added.

Kramer—whom has been tattooing for 15 years—considers himself an “everything” artist. Although he tries to tattoo whatever he can, his goal is to one day become great in Japanese, American, and Neo-Traditional styles of ink. “It’s a thrill that drives me crazy; putting my own twist into a beautiful image that will walk out of the shop,” Jason says.

Even though it’s been a bumpy road, Jason admits that the ink industry has changed his life for the better. With that said, he says he will never forget to give “Props and shout outs” to the people who helped him get to where he is now. He owes some of his appreciation to the person who first put a tattoo machine in Jason’s hands—Gordon, of Time Bomb Tattoos. “He called it ‘A machine,’ and said, ‘Do what you do.’ Right then, I knew it was a gift from God that my friend had given me; and my journey had begun.”

Respecting all aspects of tattooing, Jason picked up another skill in the multifaceted world of ink—building his own tattoo machines. “I have to give props to Chris Smith whose machines inspired me to want to learn to build my own. When I’m not pressing my footswitch, I like to spend my spare time building machines,” Kramer stated.

Determined to find a shop that he could call home, Jason jumped from shop to shop across







Maryland, such as: Sins of the Skin, Main Street Tattoos, and Dragon Moon Tattoos—learning techniques from their staff, while at the same time honing in on his own unique style of tattooing. “Watching my fellow artists excel, [and] with all of the knowledge I have learned, I decided to jump, leap, and dive, headfirst. I arrived at the doorstep of a well-lit shop called Positive Image Tattoos, [where] I proved myself to Eric Caves and Angelina Giardina—showing that I could be a humble, loyal, and dependable artist. Even though I am still being molded, I have found a family. They picked me up, dusted me off, and allowed me to give my all. I couldn’t ask for better friends.”





At a young age, Troy Clements was surrounded by art. His father used to sit him down and have him draw classic cars with pencils, in addition to cross hatch cartoon characters from old comic books. While other kids were playing outside, Troy was inside in his room, spending hours doodling away.

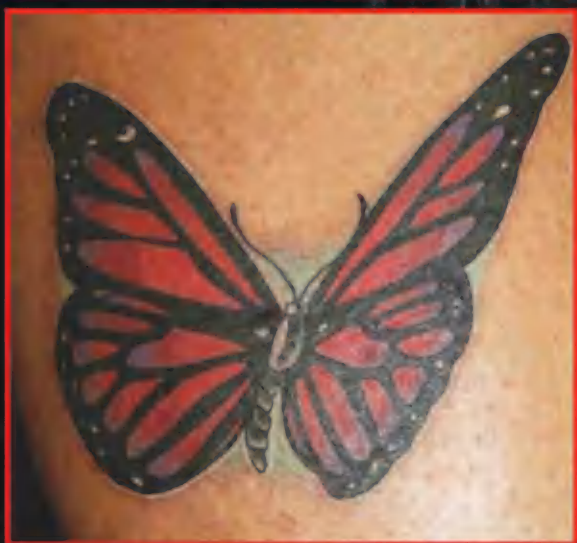
"In high school, I moved away from the pencil and the charcoal medium, and was taught how to oil paint. I had my own separate room from the art room, where I would paint through half of my school day. I have no clue how I graduated," recalls Clements.

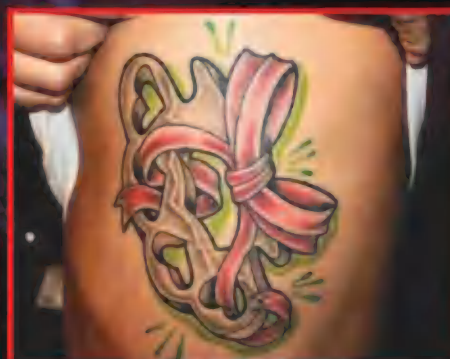
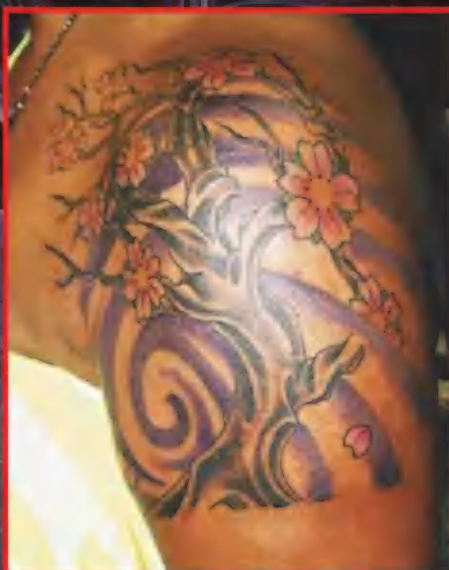
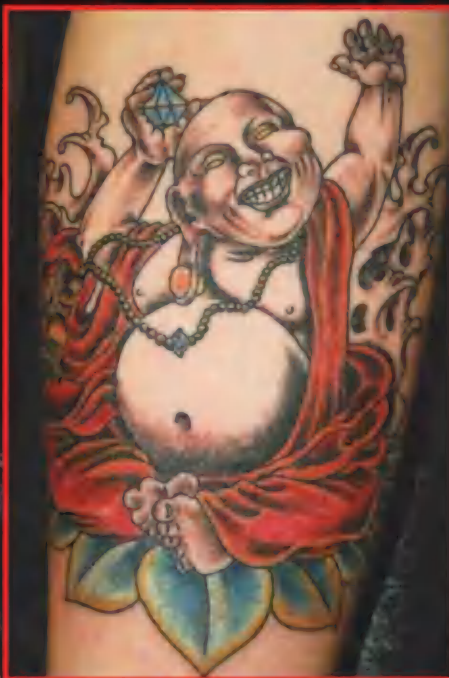
When he wasn't painting, Troy was dabbling in tattooing. "My friends and I at the age of 12 were poking each other with sewing needles and Indian ink. My friends and I would take the bus out to [the] west side to get tattooed in the living room of a townhouse by a guy who went by [the name], Tattoo Charlie." After meeting Tattoo Charlie, Clements decided that he wanted to ink others for the rest of his life. He even began leaving school early to sit in Tattoo Charlie's living room and watch him master the delicate technique, absorbing everything he could from the veteran tattooist. At 19, Troy began tattooing out of his house, however he does admit that he regrets his entrance into the ink slinging field, since due to lack of funds, he wasn't able to start his career with a formal apprenticeship like most artists do. "I got most of my practice tattooing my friends and family," he stated.

"For years, I tried to pursue my passion and do what I loved—to work full-time at a professional tattoo



Troy Clements





shop. All the shops I tried to get a job at would not give me a chance," Troy remembers. Luckily, as fate would have it, Troy met the owner of an up-and-coming shop that had garnered a substantial buzz on the streets of Baltimore after only being open for a few years. "Eric Caves—owner of Positive Image Tattoos—took a look at my portfolio and offered me a job working weekends. Within a year, I became a full-time artist, learning from the perfectionists that could help me begin a strong and successful career. I've been there now for over three years as a full-time artist, and I couldn't ask for more." ❖

Positive Image Tattoos

110 East Patapsco Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21225

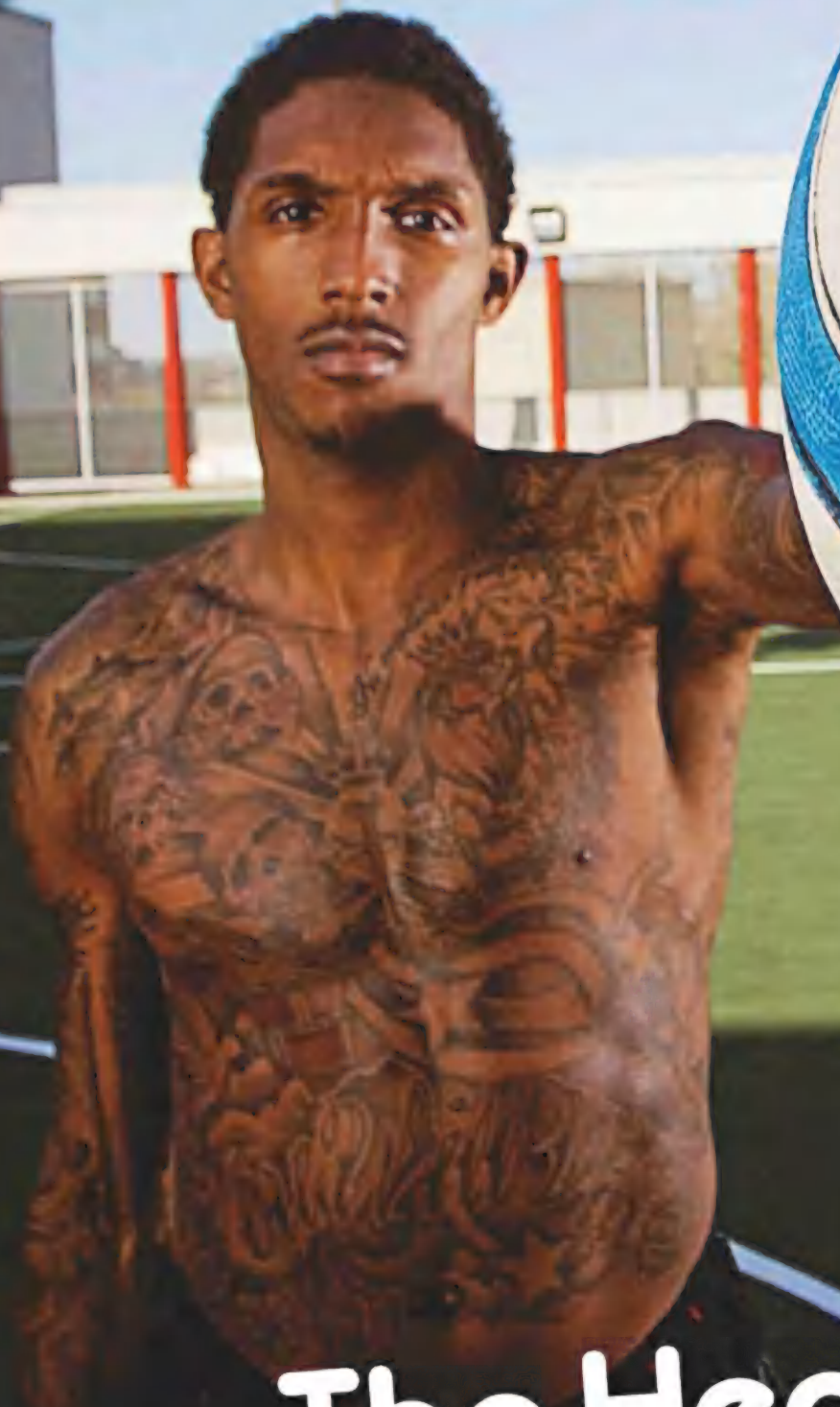
410-355-5700

positiveimagetattoos.com

URBAN INK 85

Photography by Steve Prue
Article by Marlon Robinson

Louis Wild



86 URBAN INK

The Heart Of L

Williams

In his half-dozen years in the NBA, Philadelphia 76ers guard, Louis Williams has established himself as an important part of the core of young players that have come together to bring the Sixers back to the post season. Away from the pro-ball hardwood, "LouWill" is an emerging hip-hop artist. Within his ink collection you'll find many positive messages including love for family and the code of "loyalty" which he lives by.

URBAN INK: You have "Motivation" inked across the top of your back piece. What is your motivation?
Louis Williams: Actually, I designed the tattoo myself when I was 17. The idea came to me to get 'motivation' across my back, and I wanted to spell it out for all the people that motivated me. So, what I did was, I wrote down all the names of family members and friends and all of the people that helped me along the way, and I just made it all intertwine, and it came out perfect. It was incredible how the words went together and everything. I was really motivated by my family and my friends, and the people that supported me from day one.

And the street sign in the middle of the back piece? It's the corner of 'hustle' and 'hard work.'
So, you designed the entire back piece?
I designed all of it, and actually my guy, Randy (Harris) in Atlanta drew all my work. He was able to put it together for me. He's probably done 80 percent of my tats.

You have "loyalty" on your bicep. Where and when did you learn the value of loyalty?

The people that I allowed myself to be around, my circle, we're really loyal to each other. We've always shown love from day one; and you know, it's just something that we practice what we preach. My best friend is still with me—the friend I went to high school with—so, I've always been a loyal person. When I was in high school, I was in public school. I had an opportunity to go to Oak Hill Academy, and I turned it down so that I could stay right there with my friends. I think that's where the loyalty started. On the school bus with all of those guys.

On your chest is a piece that says, "No emotions from a King." The piece also has the letters "STC" beneath it. What can you tell us about that ink?

Growing up, my dad always taught me to just be tough, to never show weak emotions, and I actually heard that in a Lil Wayne song, and it stuck out to me when I was probably 18, 19 [years-old]—"No emotions from a King." The 'STC' means 'Show Time Clique.' Like I said, that's my group of friends that I've been loyal to—and they've been loyal to me.

That's a beautiful portrait on your left shoulder

Photo by Ron Turenne/NBAE via Getty Images



Lou-Will-Ville

where it says, "Love Of My Life." Who is that?

That's my grandmother. I got that when I was young as well. She's near and dear to my heart. She suffers from Alzheimer's disease, and I wanted to get that tattoo in honor of her.

It's hard to imagine that you have any pieces in your collection that don't have a deep meaning behind it. Yeah, the majority of my stuff has a story; it means something to me. I really haven't got anything silly that I could think of. The only thing I wanted to get that was silly was the parental advisory sticker, with the explicit content. I thought that would be pretty cool. Outside of that, you know, everything has a meaning to me.

The parental advisory sticker of course relates to music, so let's get into that. You make your music under the name LouWill. When did you get into rapping?

Just free stylin' in high school on the team bus when I was with my friends. It's just something that I did as a hobby, and I got better and better at it, and I just decided to record it. It's just something that I do to pass the time. It's a





hobby, just something that I enjoy doing. *As much as there is deep meaning in your ink, what kind of messages can we find in your lyrics*

It just depends on the song. I write about different things. I try not to talk about things that I haven't experienced personally. Like the song I have out now it's called, 'I Want It All.' I really just talk about high school, and why I skipped college, and the motivation behind those decisions. So, everything I rap about, I try to have the truth behind it.

Where can we hear the music and see you do your thing?

We did one video on YouTube. The majority of the things we put out, I put on my YouTube page, which is [youtube.com/louvill23](https://www.youtube.com/louvill23). I also have a number of things on there that we filmed in relation to my life. Like, we have the birth of my daughter on there, me doing some community stuff. There's a lot of stuff that we put on the YouTube page, not just the music. It's everything that I do outside of basketball.

One of the things you do is run a camp for kids. What can you tell us about the camp?

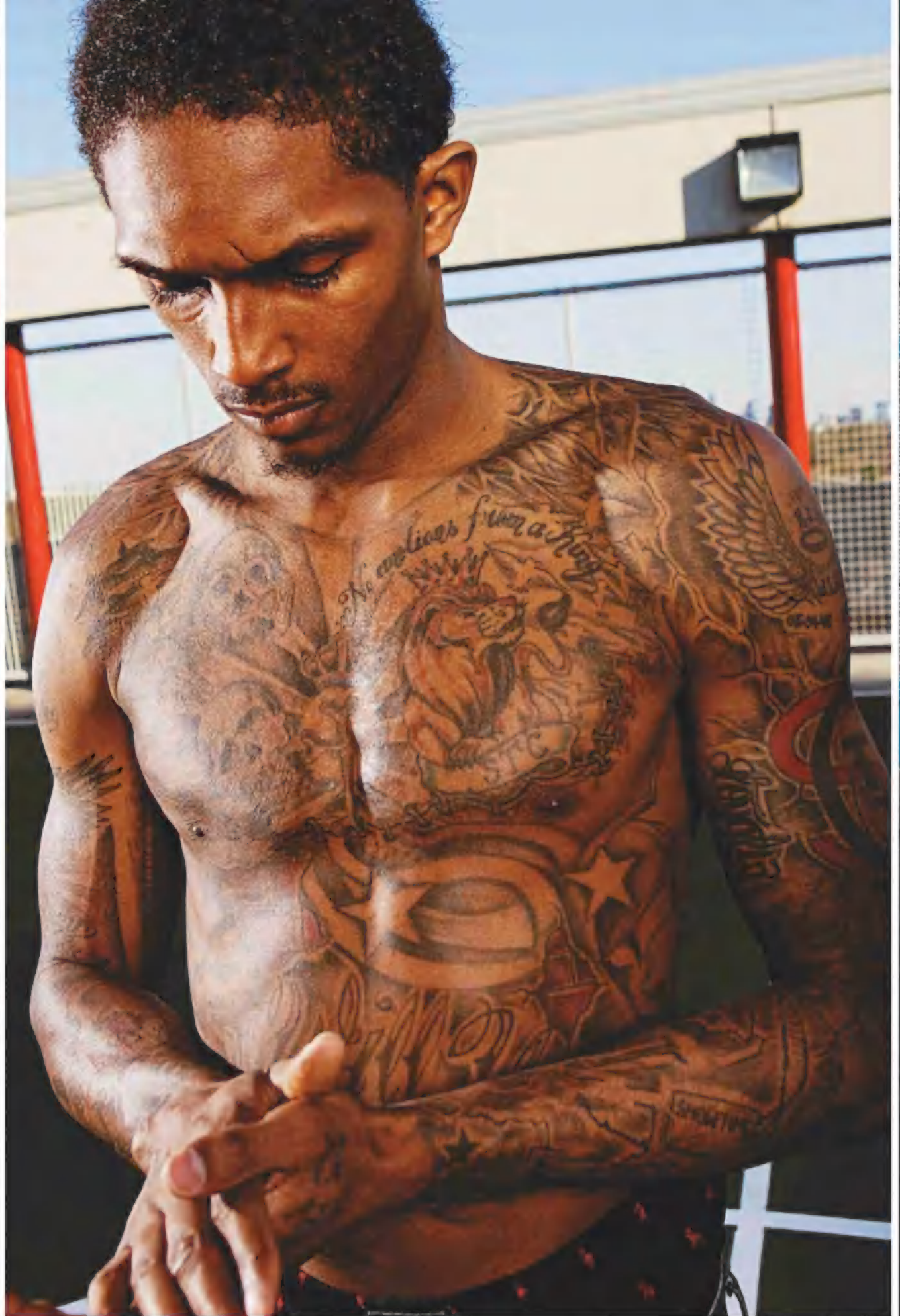
We do a camp back in Atlanta, at the high school where I went to school. We offer a camp to the kids to teach the game of basketball. We also do a free camp here in Philadelphia to show the fans here that we appreciate them as well. So, we just try to do positive things in the neighborhoods. We try to give back as much as we can.

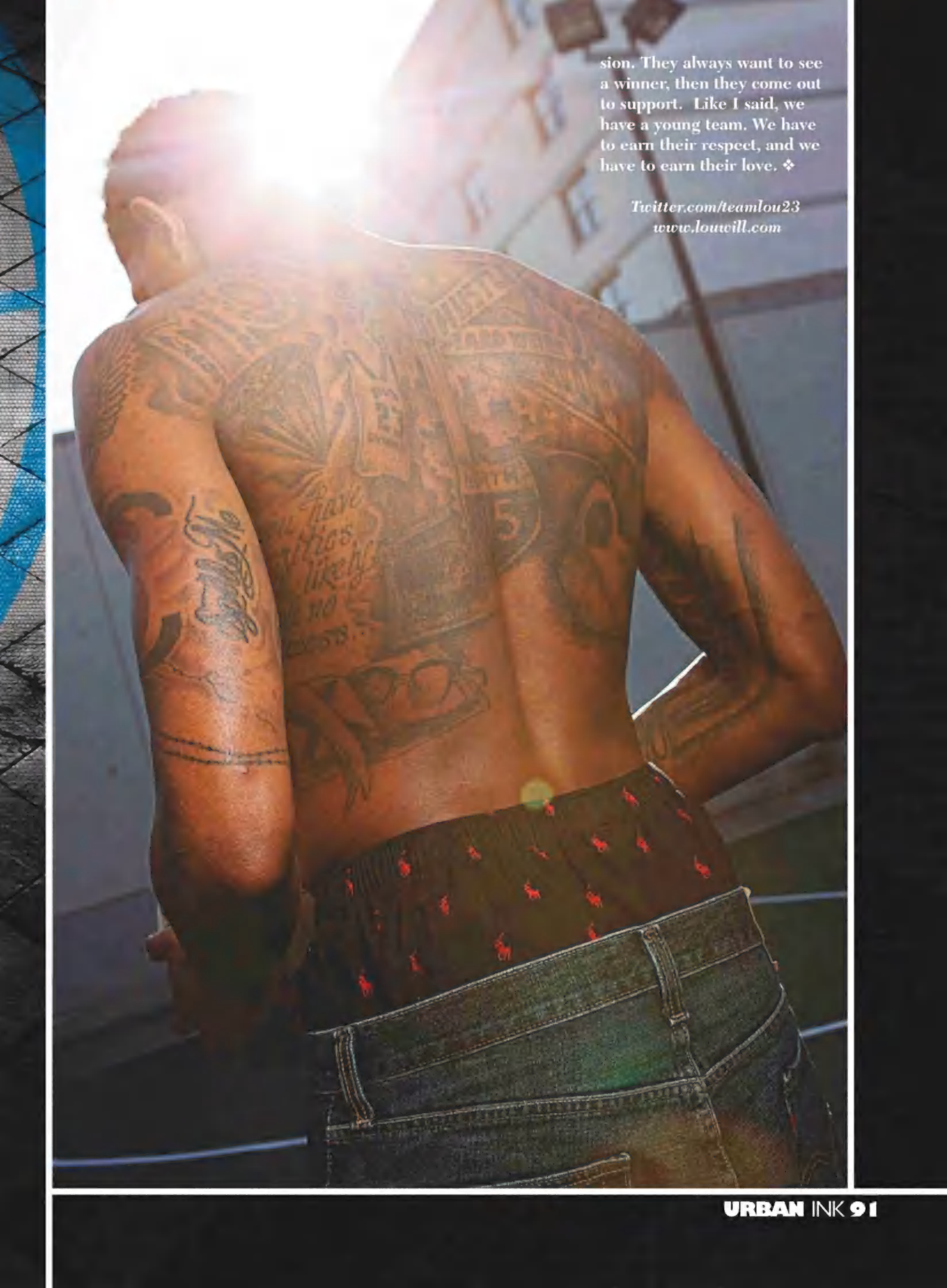
Are you comfortable with where the Sixers are these days? Does this feel like home to you?

Yeah, I love it here. This is my sixth season with the same basketball team. You know, we have a very young core of guys who are doing well. It's a big thing to be a part of when you have such young talent, and the sky's the limit.

Philadelphia is really an Eagles, Flyers and Phillies town. Do you think the Sixers are getting enough love from the fans?

I think that comes with winning. They want to see a winner. Obviously, the Phillies and the Eagles have shown that they are winners; even the Flyers at this point—they're at the top in their divi-





sion. They always want to see a winner, then they come out to support. Like I said, we have a young team. We have to earn their respect, and we have to earn their love. ❖

Twitter.com/teamlou23
www.louwill.com

TIMATI

Hip-Hop's Black Russian

Photos provided by Sepan Zakarian of Emage Productions

Article by Emmanuel Ureña

Timati—born Timur Yunusov—moved from Russia to the United States as a teenager with his parents in pursuit of the “American Dream.” Once his family reached the Land of Opportunity, young Timur gravitated towards the boom-baps of hip-hop music. Once he grew up, Timati soon realized that the beats were his calling, and ventured back to his motherland to share his newfound passion with comrades. Today, Timati heads up his own entertainment conglomerate, Black Star Inc., and is one of the biggest names in the Russian hip-hop scene. Recently, the Black Russian—as he is known in the industry—spoke with *Urban Ink* about his rise to international superstardom, his current projects and his storytelling ink.

URBAN INK: When did you come over to the States from Russia?

Timati: I came to the U.S. at the age of 13.

What was that transition like?

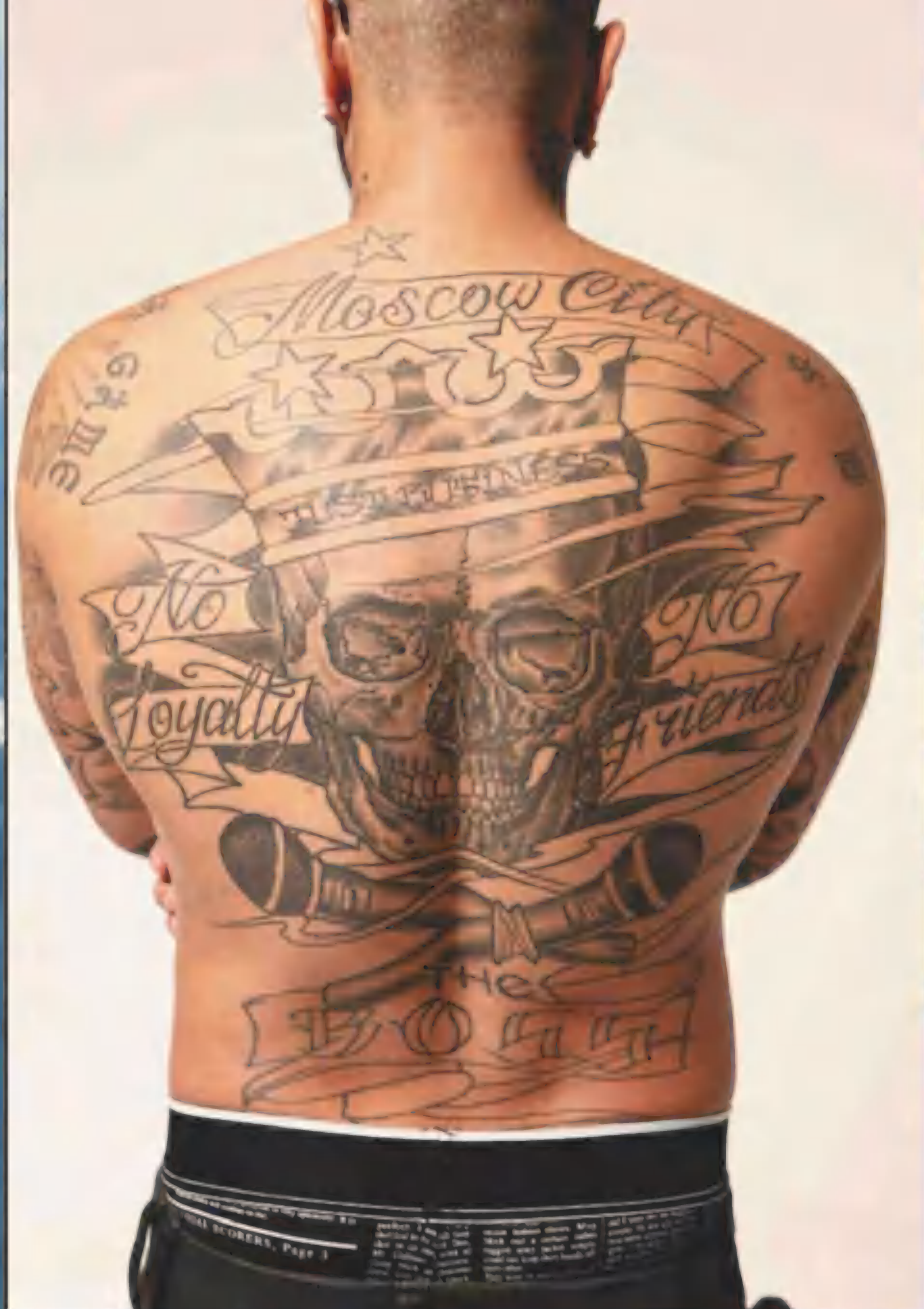
It was a whole new world for me: Skyscrapers, ideal roads, a different approach to education, to work, totally different mentality. Living in America, I learned the American dream, and understood why so many aspire for it. Eventually, I got in touch with hip-hop culture, and it became congenial to me.

When did you decide to venture into music?

Since childhood, I knew that in one way or another I would be engaged in the entertainment industry—cinema, classical music, hip-hop, alternative, pop, or another direction. At an early age, my parents sent me to music school, and since then music has gained a special place in my life.

Your competition—

“Versiya



0.1"— in Russia, offered up-and-coming singers a chance to shine, which is something that was seldom seen when you began your career. When would you say you caught your big break, and who helped you catch it?

At that time this music style wasn't popular. I was on my own. Once this industry affected not only America, but also Asia, then it came to Russia. On my very first t.v. appearance ["Star Factory 4" – Russia's version of "American Idol"] I represented this music style. This is a large culture, and I was one of the first who started to represent the hip-hop culture in Russia. I appeared much earlier than those who are currently part of the hip-hop scene in Russia.

You have worked with some of hip-hop's biggest names including: Busta, Snoop Dogg, and most recently, Diddy—for your single, "I'm On You." How did that Diddy-Dirty Money feature come about?

I can say it was part of my dream to work with Diddy—to work with the man who introduces us to the Notorious B.I.G. He is a legendary figure in hip-hop, and certainly one of the most influential hip-hop artists, so of course, the great honor, great experience, great joy, and pleasure that I received is incomparable.

When should we be expecting your new album to drop? Where can everyone go pick up your music?

My latest album, *The Boss*, was released on November 23, 2009

and has an international version. Now, I'm in the process of adding new tracks. When everything is finalized—closer to spring 2011—I will understand the terms of the release of the American version of *The Boss*, and will then start working on a new album. My music is available for download on iTunes, mostly for foreign audience. As for Russia and the CIS, my album can be purchased in any record store.

When did you begin getting tattooed?

I was 13 when I got my first tattoo. I've always paid attention to tattoos. Tattoos are like a book of life that stores events. I got a dragon on my left hand by Doctor—my best friend, and one of the best Russian tattoo artists.

Your sleeves look pretty intense. Are there any themes with the sleeves?

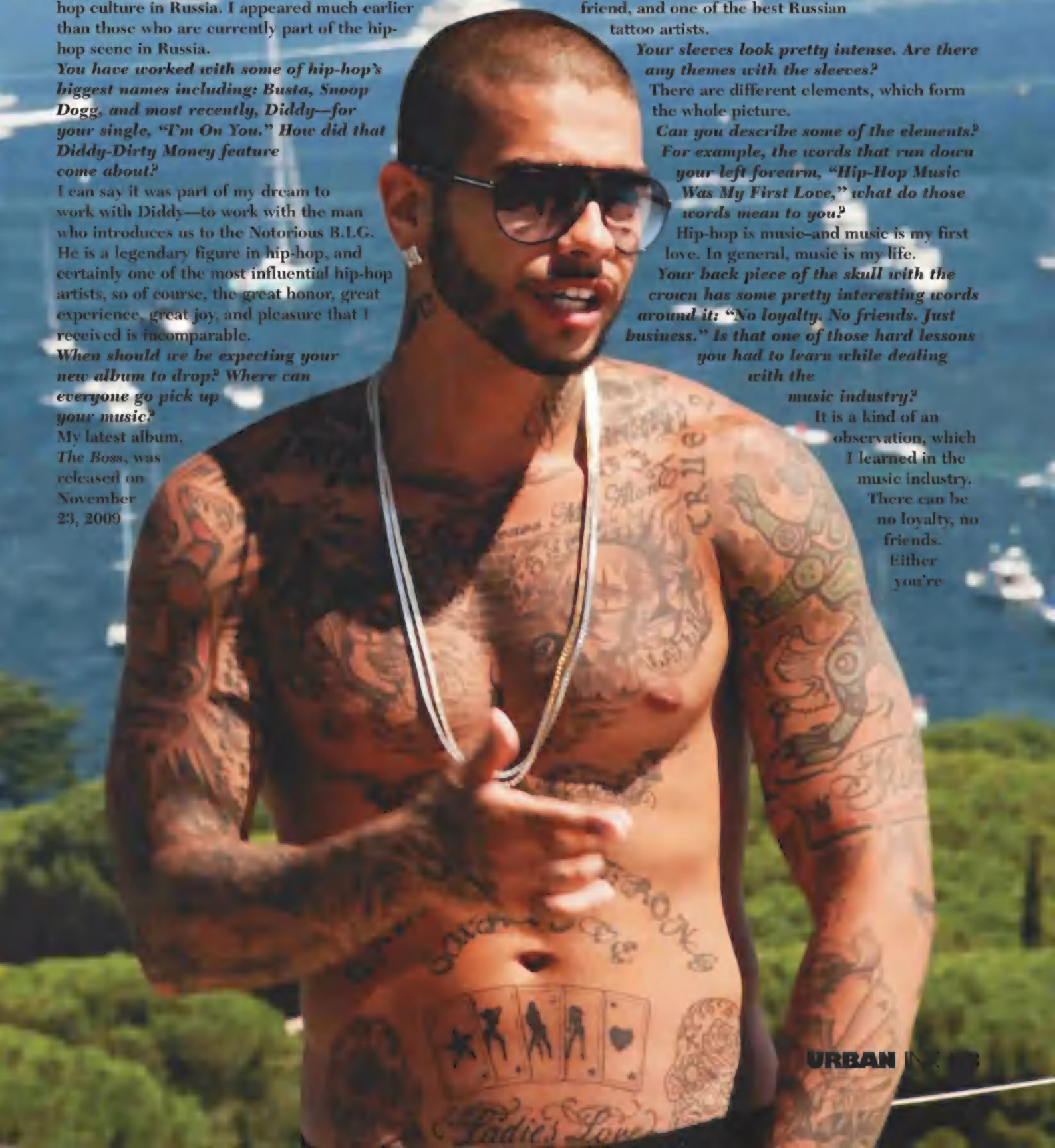
There are different elements, which form the whole picture.

Can you describe some of the elements? For example, the words that run down your left forearm, "Hip-Hop Music Was My First Love," what do those words mean to you?

Hip-hop is music—and music is my first love. In general, music is my life.

Your back piece of the skull with the crown has some pretty interesting words around it: "No loyalty. No friends. Just business." Is that one of those hard lessons you had to learn while dealing with the music industry?

It is a kind of an observation, which I learned in the music industry. There can be no loyalty, no friends. Either you're



doing the right business and a quality product, or you can stay a good guy without money. Doctor did the back piece as well.

The “Good Luck” on your knuckles, is that a wish for others or a warning?

This is for good luck on the road while driving a car or a motorcycle. But if someone calls me on it, then this expression can be considered as a warning.

You also have your record label’s name, “Black Star, Inc.” on your hands. What’s the story behind the name?

During a solar eclipse the moon covers the sun, and it turns into a black star. I stared at it, although it is not recommended, so I decided that my label would be called Black Star.

Who are some other tattoo artists who have worked on your tattoos?

Basically, 90 percent of my tattoos are all by Doctor. He has done work on almost every member of Black Star Inc. My last tattoo—a classical Los Angeles abbreviation in the form of a woman clown—was by Mister Cartoon. **Will you continue getting inked, or would you say you’ve pretty much completed your collection?**

On my body there is still plenty of space, so my book of life is not yet filled. ❖

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On October 26, 2006, after what authorities claim to have been a routine traffic stop due to an illegal U-Turn done by a bullet proof Chevy Suburban in New York City, Albert "Prodigy" Johnson—of the popular hip-hop duo, Mobb Deep—was arrested after a search of his vehicle found a .22 caliber pistol in the front console. After an intense battle in court, Prodigy was sentenced to serve three-and-a-half years in a state penitentiary.

While he was behind the bricks, Prodigy had plenty of time to work on a few things: He recorded a rough draft of new music, penned his extremely controversial autobiography—*My Infamous Life: The Autobiography of Mobb Deep's Prodigy*—and most importantly, he was able to work on himself—physically, mentally and spiritually.

Shortly after his release, Prodigy sat down with *Urban Ink* to divulge about his contentious autobiography, a plethora of future projects—both musical and charitable—and the telltale ink on his body documenting his inner battles between good and evil.

MOBB DEEP



Fine Lines Between Good & Evil

Photography by Howard Huang
(howardhuang.com)

Article by Emmanuel Ureña

Special Effects Makeup by Jeremy B. Selenfriend
(MonsterInMyCloset.com)

URBAN INK 97



URBAN INK: *In My Infamous Life*, you go into detail about your struggle with sickle cell anemia (a blood disorder where the body makes sickle-shaped red blood cells).

Was it difficult having to recall those experiences?

Prodigy: It was definitely kind of hard having to sit there and relive it all, but I had to get the story out and let people know what time it is.

You're now working with the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America on their "No Pain" campaign.

What sort of things do you plan on doing with the organization?

Basically, we're just spreading the word about diet and lifestyle, and things that you can do to make it to where you have no pain, as far as people with sickle cell. There are a lot of things that people don't know that I had to learn through trial and error on how to keep my sickle cell under control, so I wouldn't have flair ups or crises. I had to learn that the hard way, but now I could share what I know with people, and hopefully be able to help them out.

You've been seen sporting tattoos as early as the video for "Peer Pressure." You were like, 15 at that point. How long before that did you get those?

I got those tattoos probably when I was like, 13 or 14.

Was your sickle cell a concern when getting your first tattoo?

I wasn't really thinking about that, because I already knew it doesn't [affect it].

In the book, you also discussed the incident where Capone (from hip-hop duo CNN) testified for the district attorney in your friend, Killer Black's, trial. What was your relationship like with Capone since the trial, and up to the time when you penned the book?

I basically distanced myself from him after the trial. Any songs that you may have heard from CNN and Mobb Deep [since], I had nothing to do with that. I didn't even want to do songs with him after that because I'm about principles and integrity. When calls would come in from them requesting a song, I would tell Hav, 'Negative! They're not getting anything from me.' At the end of the day, they would end up getting an old song from Mobb Deep. Hav would feel differently than me, and Hav would give them something old.

And your relationship with Nore?

I don't have a problem with him. Nore never did anything to make me feel like that towards him. Mistakes happened in the past—a gun went off, he shot the gun, and hit somebody by mistake. Then, my peoples jumped him, and he came back firing at us, and shot one of my mans.

But, that's all in the past, and I learned to put that in the past and move on





with life. And that's what we did. We started making music together.

What about others' feelings about the book?

People have been saying, 'Why is Prodigy dry snitching?' Nobody can get in trouble for anything I said. Nobody can get locked up—nobody can even get interrogated for anything that I said. It's nothing that can affect anybody. The only thing that it's going to affect is your ego. There are a lot of things that people didn't want to be known, and now it's known so their egos feel bruised. And, a lot of people are probably using this as an opportunity to become famous because they really don't have any star power.

On a lighter note, your encounters with Lindsay Lohan were pretty funny—especially when you admitted to not knowing who she really was at first.

I'm telling you, I'm telling real sh*t. I didn't even have enough money when I went to the club with Lindsay. I had like, ten dollars in my pocket [Laughs]. Who would admit that? Nobody's even going to admit that. I'm not trying to put out a bogus story. The people that I deal with every day, and my circle of friends, are real ni**as who get busy in the streets. It would be against the laws of the motherf*cking streets for me to lie in a book. I deal with real ni**as every day. You know the consequences I would have to face if I did some sh*t like that?

You chronicled some of your tattoos in your book as well. You spoke about getting the half angel/half devil piece by Mister Cartoon. What was the inspiration for getting that tat?


That's what everybody goes through—a spiritual war in their body, mind, and soul. Every living person on this earth goes through a spiritual war where some-

Makeup by DeShawn Hatcher
Hair by Johnny Gentry
Models: Vanessa Veasley and
Kitti Kouture

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time the negative overcomes the good, and you just have to find that balance in life. That energy is really all one energy—it's called God; and we have the choice to use it for either something bad or something good. Everybody has that God energy in them, and it's powerful. It's the same energy either way you use it.

Have you gotten any more tattoos from Cartoon since then?

Yeah, Cartoon did my whole back. He did my arms. My whole neck, [and] my shoulders. He's the best, man. He even did [work on] my wife's arm.

Can you talk about the themes behind the pieces he worked on?

Basically, the tattoos he did on my neck along with everything else he did on me revolve around the same thing. It's one big tattoo about the same thing. It's all about good and evil—that struggle, and that war.

When should we be expecting a complete album from you?

We're working on a Mobb Deep album right now. It'll be out [in] like, August. That's all we're really doing right now—just concentrating on making a dope album. I'll worry about Prodigy another time as far as music [goes]. Mobb Deep is our bread and butter. Mobb Deep is what created Prodigy. Mobb Deep is what created opportunities for me to make the book if anything.

Now that your contract with G-Unit is null-and-void due to change of distributors, are you looking for a new label, or will you sign with G-Unit again?

Basically, G-Unit, that's our team, man. We love them ni**as to death, man. They showed us crazy love, and gave us opportunities to do all kinds of sh*t. I would love to make another album with G-Unit, but the contracts and negotiation would have to be exactly what we're looking for.

Anything you would like to clarify before we wrap?

I wanted to make a couple of things clear because there's a lot of talk going on around about the book. It's an autobiography. I'm supposed to tell the story of my life. If it happened, then it needs to be spoken about—that's what autobiographies do. I just want to make it clear for people that do f*ck with P and Mobb Deep, don't let dummies second guess somebody. Really pay attention to what they're saying, pay attention to the whole situation, and think about it logically. Don't just jump out the window with ni**as. That's all I gotta say, man. Oh, and follow me on Twitter @PRODIGYMOBB-DEEP. I stay on Twitter! ♦



Kottonmouth

ANTI-HERO INK

Photography by Universal Photo
Article by Amy Sciarretto

Kottonmouth Kings are an odd amalgam of hip-hop and punk rock—and that suits them just fine. The KMK way is a lifestyle, which influences others to adhere. Two out of seven KMK members, MCs—D-Loc and Taxman—each sport multiple KMK-related tattoos, and espouse living life as freely as you wish—with or without herbal enhancements.

D-Loc, who is an original member, MC, and writer for the band—boasts the name, “Alison” in script on his upper chest/pec area. It’s a tribute to his fiancée, with whom he’s been attached for seven years. “She’s not going anywhere,” D-Loc laughs. “I have an eagle on the side of my chest, which represents ‘American-made.’ I don’t have any one favorite. My most

favorites, though, would be my band tattoos. That is what I am most proud of!” D-Loc has four KMK tattoos in total: On his left arm, the back of his right arm, on the top of his thumb (where it bends), and one on his stomach that’s been inscribed for life over a decade ago, with the word, “truth” scrawled underneath it. Additionally, the name, “Miller”—as his birth name



Kings





is Dustin Miller—is inked onto his chest.

While it's common for people to display their surname on their backs and across their shoulders, D-Loe goes against tradition, and has his last name across the top of his chest, "So everyone knows who it is." Inked on D-Loe's lower back is: "Kingspade"—the MC's side project—not to mention the phrase, "Enjoy Life"—etched across the top of his shoulders.

"I love art and color and expressing myself through art," D-Loe bellows. "Tattoos are a good way to express myself. I do drawings, too. I just love color!"

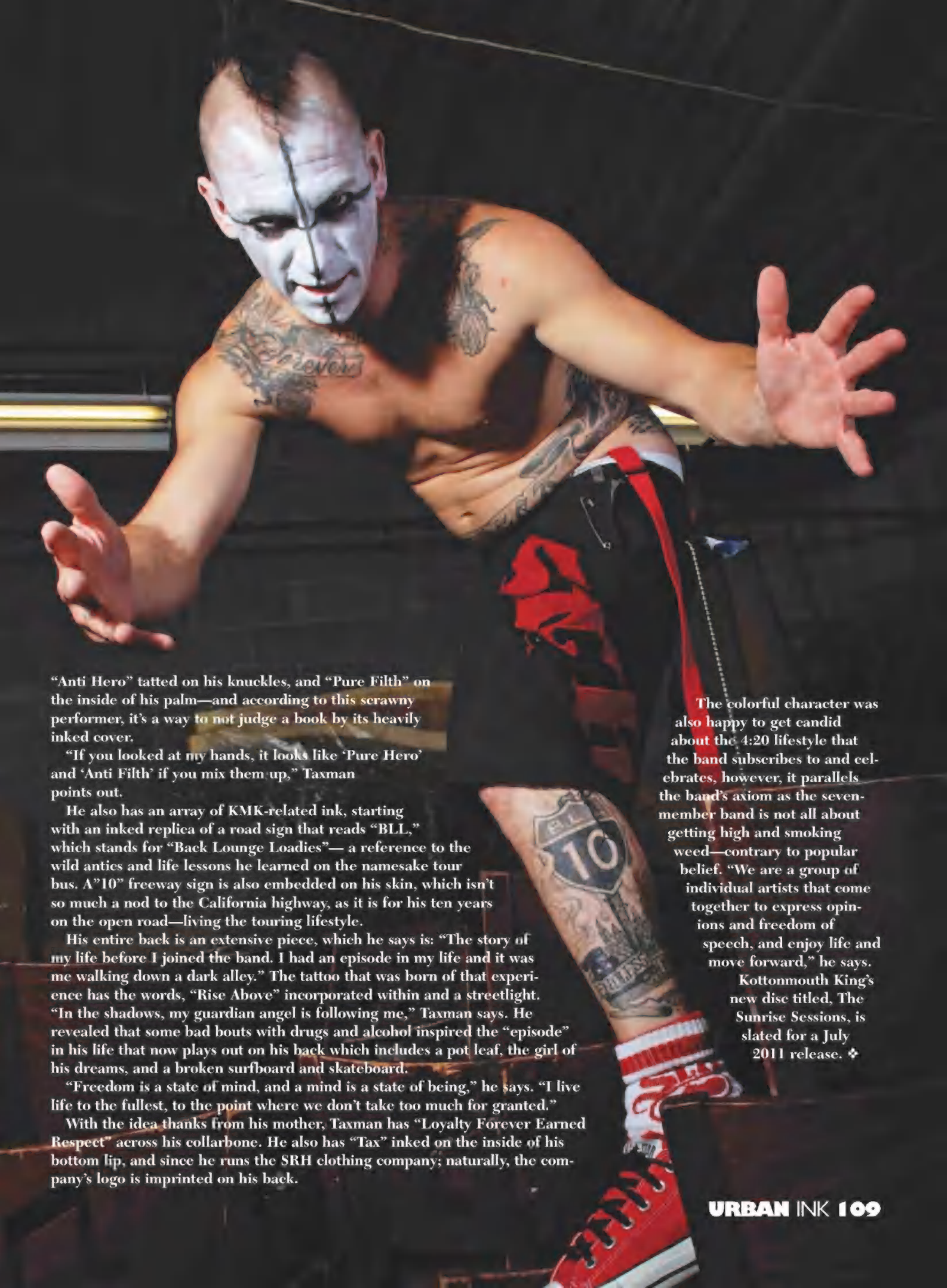
While his plethora of tattoos leaves him with very little skin ink-free, this hardcore MC actually prefers it that way. "I don't want to be all slammed up and have no free skin," he said. "I gotta keep some skin. I have more to come—here and there—but nothing is planned yet. But, of course, I will get more."

Besides his own tattoos, D-Loe—who is the owner of Hostility clothing line—says that the greatest tattoos he sees are the ones that KMK fans get. "We have such dedicated, cool, fans who love what we do and they get so into our world and show us lots of respect and even have KMK tattoos," D-Loe smiles. "That's a big confidence booster you get as a band—when someone puts your logo on them for life." The platinum blond artist has even seen some fans get tattoos of the band members' faces! "I have seen more KMK tattoos than KISS tattoos," he proclaims.

Taxman—who is typically known as the Antihero of the group, describes himself—and his personal style—by stating, "[I am] the last American antihero based on freedom to live your life how you want to," the artist says. "If you want to walk the line, you can." As a further expression of his own philosophy, Taxman inked "IFT," on his neck, which stands for: "Independent Free Thinkers." He also has







"Anti Hero" tatted on his knuckles, and "Pure Filth" on the inside of his palm—and according to this scrawny performer, it's a way to not judge a book by its heavily inked cover.

"If you looked at my hands, it looks like 'Pure Hero' and 'Anti Filth' if you mix them up," Taxman points out.

He also has an array of KMK-related ink, starting with an inked replica of a road sign that reads "BLL," which stands for "Back Lounge Loadies"—a reference to the wild antics and life lessons he learned on the namesake tour bus. A "10" freeway sign is also embedded on his skin, which isn't so much a nod to the California highway, as it is for his ten years on the open road—living the touring lifestyle.

His entire back is an extensive piece, which he says is: "The story of my life before I joined the band. I had an episode in my life and it was me walking down a dark alley." The tattoo that was born of that experience has the words, "Rise Above" incorporated within and a streetlight. "In the shadows, my guardian angel is following me," Taxman says. He revealed that some bad bouts with drugs and alcohol inspired the "episode" in his life that now plays out on his back which includes a pot leaf, the girl of his dreams, and a broken surfboard and skateboard.

"Freedom is a state of mind, and a mind is a state of being," he says. "I live life to the fullest, to the point where we don't take too much for granted."

With the idea thanks from his mother, Taxman has "Loyalty Forever Earned Respect" across his collarbone. He also has "Tax" inked on the inside of his bottom lip, and since he runs the SRH clothing company; naturally, the company's logo is imprinted on his back.

The colorful character was also happy to get candid about the 4:20 lifestyle that the band subscribes to and celebrates, however, it parallels the band's axiom as the seven-member band is not all about getting high and smoking weed—contrary to popular belief. "We are a group of individual artists that come together to express opinions and freedom of speech, and enjoy life and move forward," he says.

Kottonmouth King's new disc titled, *The Sunrise Sessions*, is slated for a July 2011 release. ♦



Justin Walker

swesh ink

Photography by ROOM703

Article by Trini Black, Model: Leezah Marie



Reality tv is known for breeding entrepreneurs. Shortly after the show wraps, it's common to catch reality show stars transform their newfound fame into brands—venturing off into new projects from book publishing, to music, and even the silver screen. Justin Walker of BET's, "Baldwin Hills" was ahead of the game from the get-go; penning Billboard chart-toppers before the hit reality show even aired. *Urban Ink* linked up with the published songwriter—turned small screen star—to chat about his Sony deal, his Swesh and why he holds Astro Boy so near and dear to his heart.





URBAN INK: *There are rumors or some confusion going around online about the fourth season of "Baldwin Hills" being filmed on this date and that date—and it debuting sometime in 2011. Is there a fourth season coming, and are you a part of it?*

Justin Walker: Well, everyone is going to have to keep an eye on all of my upcoming projects, which range from television and radio—to the big screen. You'll definitely be seeing more of me!

I read that you're a publisher for Sony and even wrote Danity Kane's hit single, "Damaged." How did the songwriting gig come about?

My diligence paid off. I was in the studio every day with my partners, and by me taking writing seriously, I started going from studio to studio to sharpen my skills as a writer. I began to make a name for myself and it finally got into the right hands.

Did the songwriting and the deal with Sony all happen during the filming of Baldwin Hills—or after?

It all kind of happened at one time, but the song wasn't on the radio or in the clubs until the show aired.

What inspired the Underdog and Astro Boy tats?

In the past I have been the underdog, but I've learned through patience that the underdog always comes out on top! Being a fan of Anime, and having a daughter, I'm always watching cartoons. "Astro Boy" is my favorite cartoon.

Not all of your tattoos are fun and colorful, though.

What's the story behind that piece on your wrist, "On Fire for God?"

I'm very passionate about my spirituality, so that tattoo expresses exactly how I feel.

What about the tattoo of the mouth with the tongue sticking out and licking the pepper?



That specific tattoo includes an apple, not a pepper. *Oops, my fault! What's the meaning of that piece?* It more so reflects me as a spiritual person because it's a reference to the Bible. It constantly reminds me to bear good fruit in the entertainment industry.

What's tatted on your left ear near your earring?

'SWESH' is tatted right there. For everyone that doesn't know what SWESH is, it's when swag meets fresh—but everybody will become more familiar with that very soon. I also have stars on my ear, which are symbolic for 'North Star,' a name that was given to me by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe in Connecticut.

What does the quote on your right shoulder say, and what does it mean?

It says: "A kind never understood." I feel a lot of people have never taken the time to understand who I am. I'm a visionary, and at times my creativity can cause others to misinterpret my ideas or intentions.

Which would you say are your most

meaningful tattoos and why?

My daughter's name, 'Kassidy,' is on my chest. That is my most meaningful tattoo. I love being a father. I spend the majority of my leisure time with Kassidy, but when we aren't together, and I look in the mirror to see that tattoo, it makes me think of her. It makes me grind harder to ensure she has everything she deserves now—and in the future.

Who do you go to for your tattoo work [artists/shops/locations]?

I have two local artists I trust to do my tattoos: Solo, and KP a.k.a I Am Compton (teamdboykp@gmail.com). They're both friends of mine that are very talented and have great artwork.

Do you plan on adding more tattoos to your collection?

I have a lot more space on my body for tattoos, but I haven't decided on what I might get in the future yet. We'll just have to see where this journey takes me and what inspires me to fill up that space.

What new projects are you working on?

I'm working on projects simultaneously. I have a few song-writing placements, I'm actively working with up-and-coming artists in L.A., my website, Jas10Walker.com, will be ready soon, and my clothing line, SWESH is preparing to launch.

I have a prosperous year ahead of me! ♦

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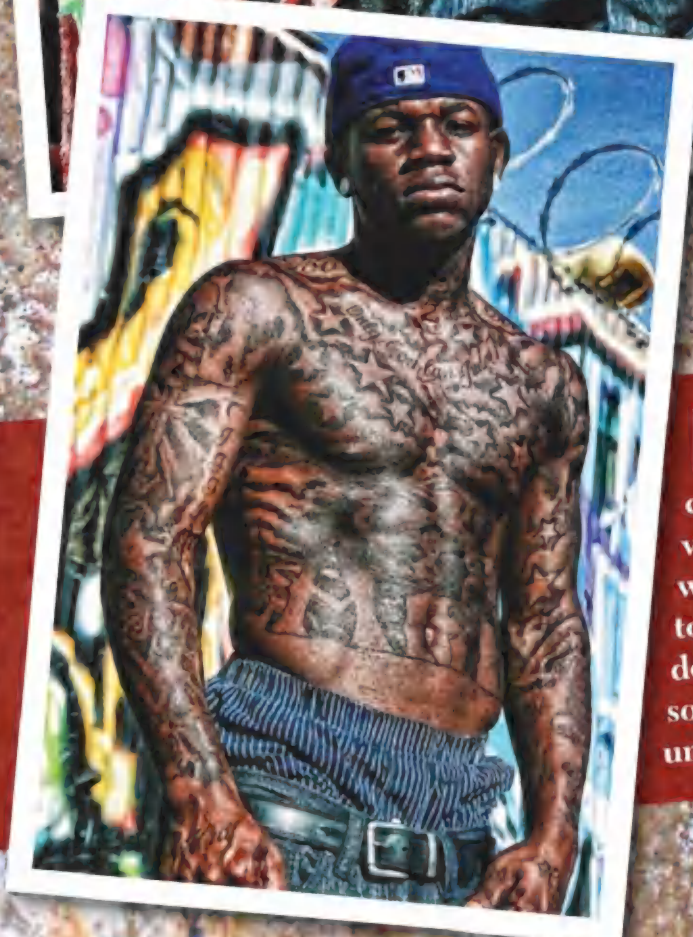
Photography by Dovane Campbell Article by Jen Gomez

Chris & Tyrus



ADDICTED 2 INK

Los Angeles natives, Chris and Tyrus aren't concerned with the stares and negative comments they get from people concerning their vast ink collection. The two tatted homies—along with the rest of their Addicted 2 Ink squad—are too busy helping out their community and laying down rhymes in the studio. Tyrus and Chris took some time out to school *Urban Ink* as to why A2i is unlike any other tattooed crew.





Chris "Rockstarr" Hunter

URBAN INK: When was Addicted 2 Ink Entertainment officially formed?

Chris Hunter: Our CEO, Jeremy "Gutta" Mack formed Addicted 2 Ink in 2008.

What was the mission behind A2i?

Our mission has always been to express ourselves through body art. We want to be recognized as more than a 'crew' or 'clique.' We are a tattoo movement. We want to inspire others to express themselves in a way that has been frowned upon for many years. Our body art is more than just permanent ink—it's an expression of our lives—our family, struggles, joys and what inspire us as individuals are represented on our bodies. Over the last couple of years, we have also reached out to our communities by helping the homeless with clothing and food drives. We also have A2i Kids Day, where we invite kids from all over to come out and have fun with us.

What are some of your specific duties as part of A2i?

I am the manager of A2i Entertainment. I manage the artist, such as A2i Moses, A2i Project, A2i CaliKidd, A2i Cruz, A2i BDott Fresh and more.

Was there a specific moment in your life that you were going through that inspired you to get the "Only God Can Judge Me" piece?

The people that frown upon what I believe in. Those that see 'A2i' on my face and feel I'm just some thug with no future. For the people that judge me at first sight, I wanted it to be very clear that only God can do so.

What are other aspects of your life which inspire your ink?

I just love the feeling of the gun and the sound of the needle. The fact that I can think of something and I'm free to express it through artwork on my body.

Are there any other tats on you that reflect your religious side?

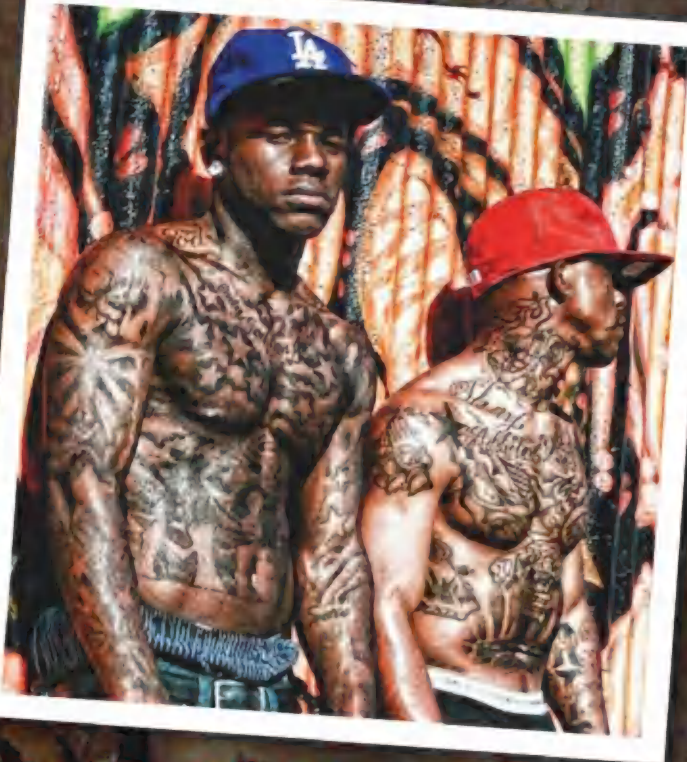
Tattoos are my religion. I believe in the art that I put on my body, and what it means to me and to so many others around the world.

If you had to choose one piece out of your ink collection, which would you say is your most meaningful tattoo out of all?

My 'Brenda' piece. That's my mother. She believes in me, and what I stand for. She has always been in my corner no matter what I go through.

Who does your tattoo work for you?

A very good friend named Juan at South Central Ink Addicts in Los Angeles, CA.



Tyrus "Boss" Clemons

URBAN INK: Which of your tattoos was your first?

Tyrus Clemons: My first tattoos were both of my parents' names: My mother, Evette, and my father, Warren. They're both on my right arm.

Do you have any other tattoos that represent the bond you share with your loved ones?

My closest family members that I have tattooed other than my parents, are my auntie, Shelby, and my grandfather, George, Sr. I also have my little nephew, Arthur, who is two-years-old.

Talk to us about A2i. What's your role in the company?

I joined A2i in April of 2009. Basically, it's an entertainment/movement group. I say 'entertainment' because people are entertained by our ink, and also we have members who act, do music, dance, etc. And I say 'movement' because we promote positivity. We are giving back to the homeless, kids and our neighborhoods. My role in A2i is first thing I'm a member; second thing is that I promote.

What do the star tattoos on your chest and arms represent? The stars on my chest and arms represent all my loved ones that passed away. Starting from my arm, my father; then on the front of my neck, my auntie, Shelby; and on the side of my neck, I have my grandfather, George Sr. I decided to symbolize their memory with their names in clouds and stars.

Where do you go to get your tattoos, and who is your tattoo artist of choice?

I get my artwork done at Flaming Ink on 417 West El Segundo Blvd in Los Angeles, California. My tat artists are Bone and Dave.

If you had to choose one piece out of your ink collection, which would you say is your most meaningful tattoo out of all?

My most meaningful tattoo would be the Watts Towers, which is located on my right side on my ribs—it represents the life that I used to live, and symbolizes the 'struggle' I have overcome. ♦





Brooklyn Payne Ink Without Limits

Article by Anthony Monk

A 20-year veteran of tattooing, Brooklyn Payne can most often be found either designing one of his prize-winning pieces, or inking his extraordinary creations to the skin of clients at Afflicted Desires in Bethlehem, PA. Payne's success at the tattoo hustle comes mostly from an unwavering dedication to perfecting his art, as well as a determination to not be held back by preconceived ideas about the limitations that come with putting color-driven ink pieces on clients with a darker tone.





URBAN INK: Can you let us in on the kind of training you have had as an artist?

Brooklyn Payne: I had an apprenticeship, but my style now is self-taught, and [I] developed on my own. I think I missed out on formal training. I wish I had the opportunity to take advantage of it, but it never came. So, all my training was self-taught, and through trial and error. Luckily, I got it, and I took it to the next level.

In terms of preparations, equipment, etc.—do you approach portrait pieces any different than the other tattoo work you do?

Yes, my portraits are real personal; and I use a painting style in the skin—no hard lines. Just ink saturations built up to achieve that realism that the eye really sees. People try to tattoo how they think things should look. I tattoo exactly what I see, and I developed a vision on portraits that allows me to look deeper than just the features. I see light sources and shadows, which gives you the real dimension of portraits.

A good portion of your tat work—as well as your paintings—are in the horror genre. What is it about the genre that offers you so much inspiration?

I am an avid movie collector, and I love horror. It's so expressive in many ways. Horror causes so many reactions from people, but all in all—I just love movies.





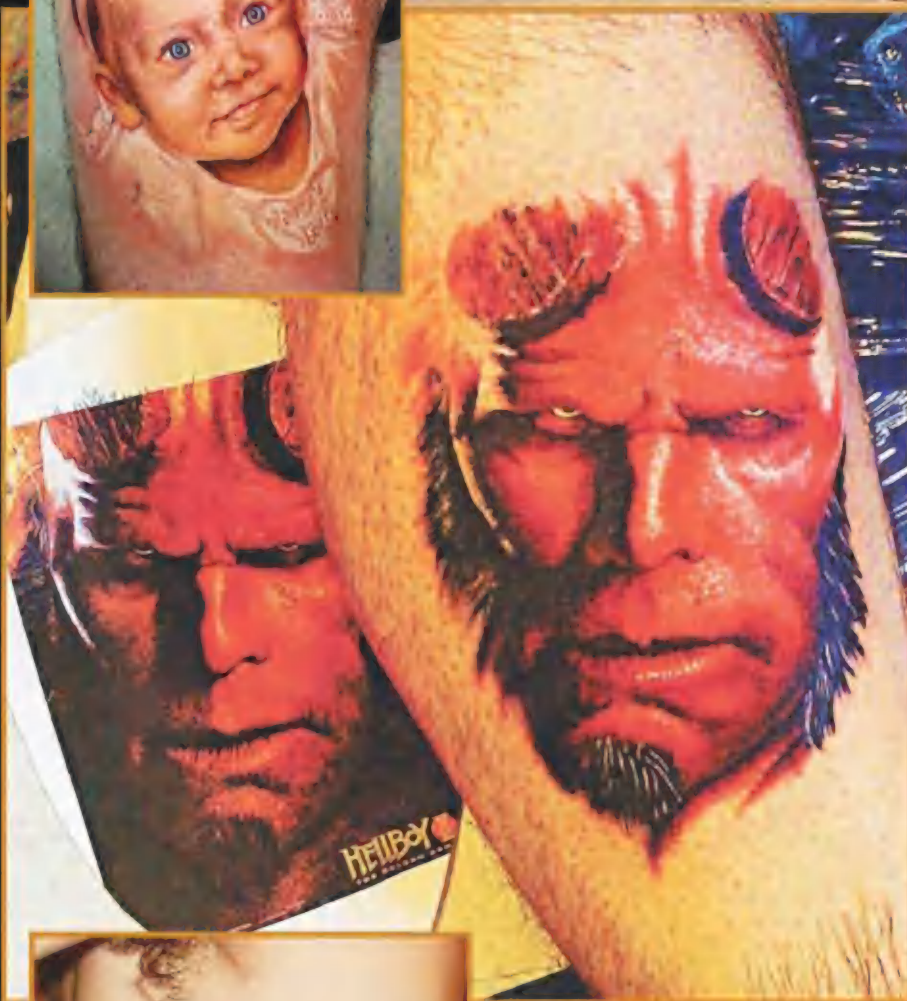
By now, you have achieved some major notoriety as an artist and have won several awards for your work. Is being validated and respected within the tattoo community important to you?

Not as important as the gratification of making my customers happy, and seeing my final piece of art in the skin. Making people smile and just awe at my work is far more satisfying than what the people in the industry think. But, it's nice to travel the country and have a fellow artist say, 'Hey, nice work, man!'

In your tat samples, your work includes white clients as well as clients of color. How do you approach doing the kind of vibrant work you do on darker skin?

I put in the work! That's really all it is—color skin takes color just as well as white skin. It's more about the artist. If he doesn't take his time and saturate the color, it's not gonna work. It's all about the artist and the pride he takes in his work, and his work ethic. I love proving people wrong and blasting color into colored skin, and having people say, 'Wow, they told me I couldn't get color.'

How do you mentally approach working on pieces for clients that are of subjects outside your areas of



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comfort, or even interest?

I have no areas outside my comfort zone. If it's art, then it's in my zone.

Does getting to know the client—as well as the meaning and significance of the piece you'll be inking—change the way you approach the work?

I get to know each and every one of my clients. Tattooing is up close and personal, and I like to feed off of them. Yeah, sometimes the stories of why they want the tattoo—or the meaning of it—pushes my needle a little further in, making it just that more special for them.

For readers who are interested in talking to you about perspective work, are you reachable?

What kind of a wait are they looking at?

Call 610-625-0325. The wait is usually from two weeks to a month, depending on the amount of reference I need to obtain to design the perfect tattoo. Every piece I do is custom. I don't do flash. I believe every piece should be original.

Which conventions do you have plans to be working in the coming year?

I will be attending any convention Tommy's Supply and Starbrite Ink will be attending. They are my sponsors, and I'm on tour with them.



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A woman with dark hair and bangs is sitting in a red chair, looking off to the side. She has a large tattoo on her right arm featuring a sugar skull and roses. She is wearing a grey tank top and denim shorts. The background is dark and out of focus.

WILMARIE

—SENA—

Bad Girl ♦ Cool Ink

Photography by Dan Howell

Article by Jen Gomez

Makeup by Crystal Paige
(crystalpaigebeauty.com)

Passaic, New Jersey beauty, Wilmarie Sena, came across an ad to audition for the volatile reality joint, "Bad Girls Club" 48 hours before the deadline. Not only did she land the gig, but also she took full advantage of the opportunity by becoming one of the standout personalities on the show.

Stacked with ink and attitude, it didn't take long for Sena to establish her hardcore temperament to her housemates—not to mention her viewers—showing the nation that she is bold, confident, and definitely not a girl to be messed with. Yet, as brutish as this feisty Latina appears on the small screen, Wilmarie assures us that she can still get mom's approval.

URBAN INK: *Let us in on your life and background before hooking up with "Bad Girls Club."*

Wilmarie Sena: I'm the oldest out of five, so I basically was the one who had to help my parents with their business. I ran my father's freight truck company and my mother's beauty shop.

And how did you get involved with the show?

It's pretty crazy. I was bored at the beauty shop one day and saw an ad [that read], 'Send bio and pics to Oxygen for 'BGC' casting by June 23.' It was June 21, so I sent my bio and pics. From there, it's history. I didn't even think they would check my bio because casting was over in two days.

Do you see your tattoos as a symbol of your "bad girl" image, or is the ink more about art and beauty?

Ink to me is more about art, and a way to express yourself. I love photography and art. My casting tape was me showing casting directors stuff I have made myself at home, so I'm a big art geek.

What artist or artists have worked on you?

All my ink is done from True Blue Tattoo in the Middle Village, Queens [New York]. My artists are Alex, Rob and Bennie.

What is the story behind the ink on your left side and hip?

That's my koi fish. It was my first big piece. It was kind of a symbol of

Harry Keitt





what I was going through at that moment in time. My koi is black because it stands for 'father.' I'm really close to my dad. It's swimming upwards, fighting ahead against the waves. That just stands for me making it through anything life sends me. The waves symbolize all the different challenges life will bring me, because each wave is different—some are bigger than others.

Then, on my arm, I have Santa Muerte, [Mexican goddess of death] 'Day of the Dead,' but I believe in her as a saint. She's like my protector [Laughs]. I know, crazy, right?

That's a beautiful half sleeve on your left arm.

Are there plans to make it a full sleeve?

Yes, I'm planning to finish my sleeve. I might add some skeleton mariachi band—it's going to look sick.

How would you describe the style of ink you wear?

I was going for the old school Japanese look, but now it's just whatever my crazy mind wants on my body. [Laughs]

I saw in your audition tapes for "BGC" that you didn't have your sleeve work yet. When did you get it?

I was going to get my sleeve before moving into the 'Bad Girls' house, but then the casting directors called me to head to Cali to start filming. So, I decided to wait until I came back because I didn't want it to be healing while filming. Some crazy bitch would have scratched my new piece or it would get infected, so when filming was over, and I landed home the next day, I did my tattoo. *Of course, going into "Bad Girls Club," you have to know that the confrontations can get pretty explosive. Do you consider yourself tough? Have you*







always handled confrontations well?

By 'tough' do you mean, 'Defending yourself from people trying to hurt you?' Yes, I am. I don't let anyone step on me, and I've handled a lot of confrontations well. I have punched three guys in the face already.

Is there a side of you that you want people to know about that wasn't shown on tv?

I don't want people to think I'm always fighting in the streets, and that a guy can't take me home to his mama cause I will start a fight at the dinner table. [Laughs]. I'm not like that. I'm always smiling and laughing. You need to really bug the crap out of me to get a reaction like you saw on t.v. ♦

Keep up with Wilmarie Sena on Twitter: [@thatssowilma](https://twitter.com/thatssowilma)

FIREHOUSE CHIEFS

Photography by Lan Doan
(greenergrassphotography.com)
Article by Razor Leary



BLAZING HOT INK

Firefighters are the backbone of every community. The brave men and women put their lives in danger on a daily basis, keeping their communities safe from dangerous, blazing fires. Recently, *Urban Ink* linked up with Long Beach, California, Fire Captain, Eddie Sell—creator of the “Firehouse Chefs” web reality show—and his fellow chefs—consisting of both firemen and policemen—who gave us the 411 on their skills in the kitchen, as well as the ink that represent their passion for their courageous careers—and of course, their taste for all things gastronomical.





Eddie Sell
Long Beach Fire Department
Station 7 B
Fire Captain



URBAN INK: *Talk to us about the “Firehouse Chefs.” What was the goal behind the program?*

Eddie Sell: The goal of ‘Firehouse Chefs’ is to showcase the cooking talents of America’s firefighters, and to show the viewers that today’s firefighters have incredible back-stories, are diverse and reflect the diversity of America. Also they have great traditions and customs that vary from city to city, and are a huge part of the communities that they serve.

Your show doesn’t only focus on your firehouse. You also go out and search for chefs in other houses. How can other firehouses get a shot to participate?

Firehouses that would like to be featured on ‘Firehouse Chefs’ just need to contact us at

www.FirehouseChefs.com. The information that they should include is: The size of their fire department, are they a paid or volunteer department, how many great cooks they have and what their specialties are.

Where can we catch the latest

episode(s) of “Firehouse Chefs?”

‘Firehouse Chefs’ is currently in the production phase. We are actively filming content. Fans can check our website and the ‘Firehouse Chefs’ Facebook page for show updates and also for web videos that are being shot now.

I understand you were cooking a long time before becoming a fireman. When did the passion for cooking spark within you?

My passion for cooking was sparked from assisting my mother in the kitchen and falling in love with the traditional Mexican dishes that she cooked. She would tell me stories of how the dishes originated from our family in Mexico and in Spain, and always added the names, towns and customs that were part of what made each dish special. Watching her and learning her flavor profile molded me into the chef I am today, and I have carried that influence with me through culinary school in the Navy and in the firehouse kitchen.

The ink work on your sleeves is



impressive. Who's your go-to guy for your tattoos?

Ben Fitzgerald at American Beauty Tattoo in Sunset Beach, CA has done most of my tattoos. I have gone to Ben for over ten years and I have always loved how he transforms my visions into amazing work. *Your sleeves seem focused on the traditional Japanese style. What is it about this style that attracts you to it?*

I have always been attracted to the traditional Japanese style art because of its tie in to the Fire Service. My left arm has a Japanese style influence with big pieces that include: A dragon, bat (the AFI punk band symbol), chrysanthemums, and Japanese wind bars. My right arm combines my Mexican and Irish background by incorporating a big shamrock that has a Day of the Dead skull in the center. *I see some sugar skulls mixed in there as well. What was the thought behind those?*

The inspiration behind my skulls is the Day of the Dead theme. In Mexican culture, death and the imagery of skulls is celebrated and therefore depicted in a colorful, and vibrant way. I like the contra-

diction in terms and ideas that make tattoos great and meaningful to the individual and confusing to others.

Can you describe the piece on your chest?

My chest piece is a Sacred Heart Scene, flanked by skulls. This tattoo is a tribute to my faith and to my culture. I love blending religious symbolism with a Latin inspired edge and look.

Do you have tattoos that represent your fireman and/or chef lifestyle?

I have a tattoo of an open book on my right shoulder area. The open book is a direct reference to my chef's insignia on my uniform when I was a chef in the U.S. Navy. The book—along with old style keys and the initials—'FHC'—are symbolic to my being a chef and the journey that the Firehouse Chefs Project has taken me on. I also have a California road map on the inside of my left calf area. The road map is made to look like an old treasure map that has sugar skulls representing the areas in California that I have worked as a firefighter over the last 18 years.



Jeff Hardin
Long Beach Fire Department
Station 10 A
Fire Captain

URBAN INK: *What do the words: "Victory Over Death" mean to you?*

Jeff Hardin: 'Victory Over Death' is a hard one to explain. The tattoo on my back was a memorial for my father. He passed away of a sudden heart attack when he was 57. He was never worried about dying and because of his faith he actually looked forward to the day it came. He believed that your demise is strictly the decision of God, and death will always be his triumph.

There's also a date [3-14-07] written on your back piece. What does that day signify?

That's the date of my father's death.

Who did the work on your back and arms?

Ben Fitzgerald. He's an awesome artist, and he free handed all my work.

Do you have a chef/cooking background or have you picked it up from the rest of the guys at the firehouse?

My foundation for cooking came from my mother. She cooked six to seven days a week for us growing up, so I was able to watch and learn. I learned the rest from some great cooks at the firehouse, books, and chefs on tv.

What's the one dish that you always nail every time you cook it?

Chili Verde. I've made it so many times, and each time, I try to tweak it a little bit to make it even better. I don't think I've cooked it the exact same way twice.





Matt Montague
Orange County Fire Authority
Station 3
Reserve Firefighter

URBAN INK: *Your collection is very in-tune with Japanese style. What is it about the Japanese theme that made it your choice of style?*



Matt Montague: A couple of things inspired that choice of style for me. Having the passion to be a firefighter brought me to learn that the Japanese were one of the first to start a way of fire fighting dating back to 1629. Also, having lived in Hawaii for five years, I learned a lot about the Japanese culture and fell in love with the style of their traditional artwork.

Who does your tattoo work for you?

While living in Hawaii, I had my first tattoo done at Aloha Tattoo in Oahu, which was my dragon on my back. My arm was done by my very talented friend, Jeff Runnells, in Huntington Beach.

The dragon tattoo on your back is very detailed. How long—or how many sessions—did it take to finish it?

That was my very first tattoo, so I was really nervous! Funny thing

is, that the tattoo artist had a bet going with the other artist saying that he could finish it in three hours. Needless to say, that made me even more nervous, but he finished it in time and it turned out perfect!

How did you become involved with the “Firehouse Chefs” program?

Through my very good friend, Eddie Sell. I have been involved with the ‘Firehouse Chefs’ program since the beginning. I am proud to be a part of this vision that Eddie is making a reality!

Do you have a chef background, like say Eddie does?

Not exactly, but I am a quick learner. I am gaining a great deal of knowledge from Eddie and the rest of the team. I really enjoy working with the guys and getting to know each person’s culinary talents, and I am now building my own from there.

What’s your signature dish that you’re known for?

My favorite dish to make is blackened chicken fajitas with a cilantro lime marinade served with saffron infused yellow rice and chipotle guacamole! This dish is exploding with flavor! Anyone that I have made it for is blown away and can never get enough!



URBAN INK: *The fire scene on your back obviously depicts your career as a fireman. However, the skulls floating in the smoke above gives the image a deeper, more mystical look. Can you tell us how you and the tattoo artist developed this piece?*

Marcel Melanson: The artist's name is Gilbert Torres from Buena Park, CA. Gilbert is a close friend of mine and when developing the piece it was inspired by the *Backdraft* movie poster. I am a big fan of skulls of all kinds I guess that's my way of dealing with the death we see everyday. On a

serious note, I guess that's me embracing the darker side of life. I have always had an affinity with skulls and pirates.

Did you just tell him what you wanted and then let him do his thing, or did you have input on every detail of the piece?

Gilbert has done most of my tattoos and we very carefully go over every aspect of all of my tattoos and their meaning. Some are inspired by pictures and posters, and some are just drawn up and thrown together with my artist.

How did you get involved in the "Firehouse Chefs" project?

Eddie and I have been friends for approximately 15 years, so when the 'Firehouse Chefs' project started I was in full support of whatever Eddie had going.

Did you have to cook a special dish for Eddie and the rest of the guys to get in there?

No there is no initiation dish. We all work at different firehouses across the county, so passion for the job and firehouse reputation helps when getting involved with the project.

What type of dish are you most known for?

I cook a mix of Italian and Latin dishes with the focus on being healthy and providing a great meal for a low cost.

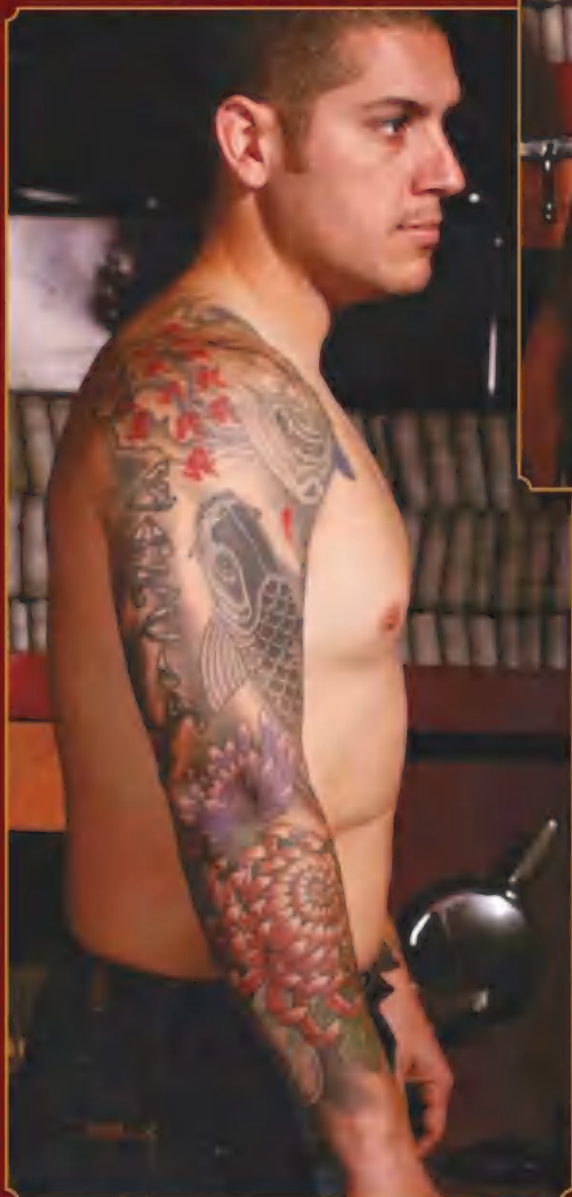


Marcel Melanson
Compton Fire Department
Battalion Chief





Jason Garcia
Long Beach Police Department
Special Detail Assignment
Police Officer



URBAN INK: *One thing that I'm noticing about the tattoos on you and the rest of the guys is that you all are in some way fond of the Japanese style. Is there a connection between Japanese tattoos and firemen/police-men that I'm unaware of?*

Jason Garcia: I think you see a lot of people with Japanese tattoos because the artwork looks great and the meanings behind it are positive. The Japanese work I have on my body for the most part represents strength and courage. I believe you need strength and courage to get through everyday life, let alone being a Long Beach Police Officer.

You have a portrait on your ribcage. Who are the people on the portrait?

The portraits are of my wife, Chrissuna Garcia, and my oldest son, Linkin Garcia.

Who does your tattoo work for you?

My right arm sleeve was done by K from Outer Limits. My portraits were done by Tim Hendricks. The lower portion of my left arm sleeve was done by Phillip Spearman from Ink Works, and the top portion was done by Tiffany Garcia from Outer Limits.

Were you cooking on a regular basis in the firehouse before the Firehouse Chefs program began?

Being a Long Beach Police Officer, I have had the opportunity to work side-by-side with firefighters. I have built friendships with many firefighters and have been able to experience how firefighters prepare and eat good meals. As a police officer, we are eating on the run on a daily basis, which prevents me from eating healthy meals. I have been fortunate to join the local Long Beach Firehouses in their healthier family style meals. I have become great friends with Eddie Sell and believe in his concept.

Do you take what you learn at the firehouse kitchen home when you cook for your family?

I enjoy volunteering with the preparation and cooking at the Firehouse Chef events. These great experiences have allowed me to become a better cook at home for my family.



**Matthew M. Malaefou
Mackenzie**
**Long Beach Fire Department
Station 7 B**
Firefighter

URBAN INK: *Can you describe the tattoo on your leg?*

Matthew M. Malaefou Mckenzie: The island tribal band on my calf is a combination of traditional Samoan designs with a shade of Maorian print.

What was the inspiration behind it?

[It] is my family's traditional design passed down through generations. Tattoos are a huge part of the Samoan culture. I got my first tattoo when I was six-years-old.

Who did the ink work on it?

A friend by the name of Tavita; did the piece on my calf. He does work on all of my cousins.

What dish are you most known for around the firehouse?

I'm known for my 'Monster' cookies. I love sweets, so I enjoy making different types of cookies. My go-to cookie is a mix of milk chocolate chips, white chocolate chips, and macadamia nuts.

Are there any cooking skills you've learned from working in the kitchen with the rest of the guys?

I feel fortunate to work, and learn a ton of cooking skills from so many talented cooks in my department. I've learned the most about the basic concepts of cooking from Eddie Sell. An important cooking tip I learned was to allow the meat to sit and cool off for 10-15 minutes after taking the meat off the grill. This allows the juices to be absorbed in the meat.



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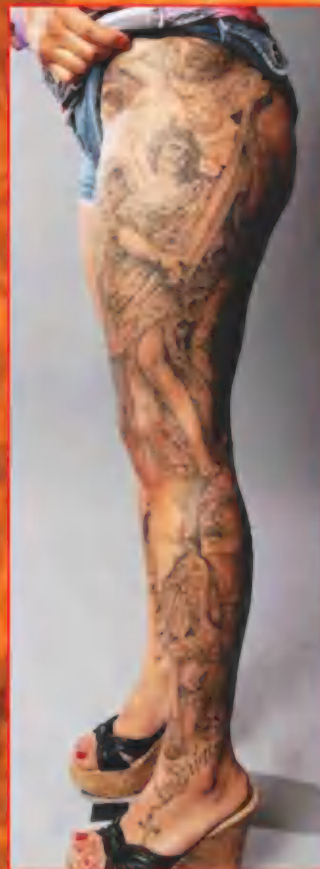
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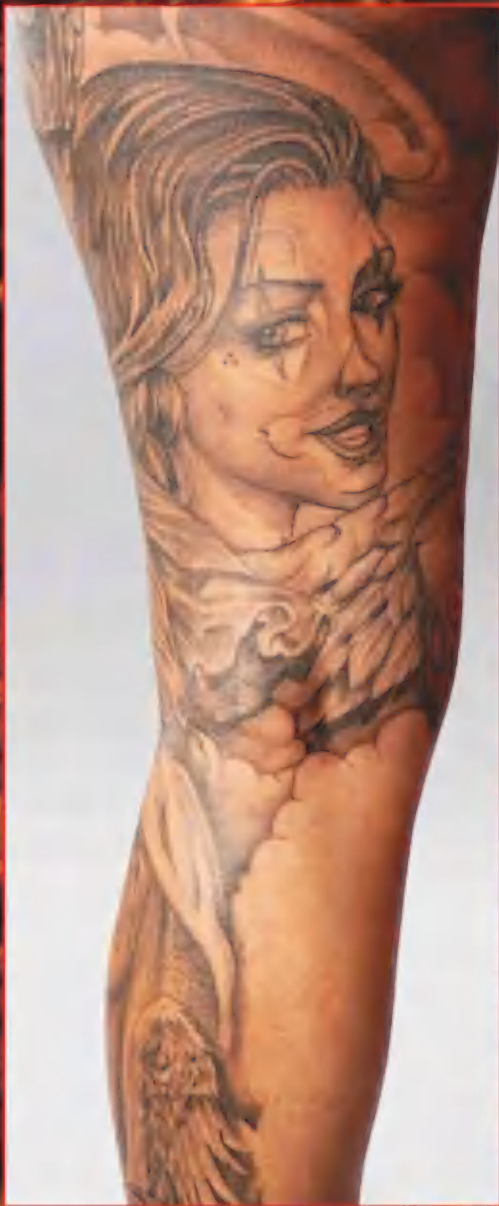


If ever there was a convention that was made for the new generation ink crowd, it's the Hell City Tattoo Festival. Hell City is the brainchild of slinger extraordinaire, Drub Morison, and he deserves platinum props for putting on a yearly spectacle that brings together everything that is edgy and cool about being part of the body modification population.

Countless "hellions" have formerly packed the Hyatt Regency Center in "Killumbus," Ohio to drink in the ink as well as the other psychotic attractions on the Hell City menu, which included live sets from: Two Cow Garage, The Aesthetics, and Cadaver Dogs, not to mention a performance by the entertaining and alarming cats from the Cut Throat Freak Show.

Another reason that Morison gets the thumbs way up is that even while the Hell City show is a balls-out







assault on the senses, tattooing remains priority number one. The roll call of artists who traveled to Ohio to leave their mark on the Hell City fest featured no less than the likes of: Myke Chambers, Lyle Tuttle, Michelle Wortman, Joe Capobianco, and Guy Aichison.

A highlight of the festival is the plethora of feedback within the vendors, artists, and others in the ink scene, and each year, as *Urban Ink* treks out into the convention circuit, it's safe to say that the urban ink movement is representing well at major shows in the U.S.—one that makes this magazine particularly proud.

Unfortunately, for our friends on the right side of the map, Hell City 2011 will be limited to a weekend on August 26-28 in Phoenix, Arizona, instead of the original Ohio roots.

Given this change, however, Morison promises that the event will be no less spectacular than the previous Hell City Festivals that graced "Killumbus." And, based on *Urban Ink's* encounters with Morison and his well-earned reps in the convention game—ink slingers, collectors, and fans alike will have every reason to believe that he is a man of his word. ❖

For more on Hell City visit hellcity.com

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